

Messenger

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 25, No. 2



**MOVE TOWARD
INTERNET -
BASED
ASVAB TESTING**



**PASS THROUGH
FREEDOM'S
FRONT DOOR
VIRTUALLY**



Transformation — Military Entrance Processing Goes Virtual



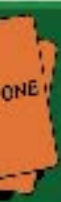
**A-Z
PROCESSING
REVIEW**

METRICS

**TOP TO
BOTTOM
INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY
REVIEW**

**MEPCOM
INTEGRATED
RESOURCE
SYSTEM**

**STRATEGIC
PLAN**



**TAKE 2
STEPS
TOWARD MORE
EFFICIENT DATA**



**ADVANCE
TO GO,
COLLECT
\$\$\$**



Messenger

U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

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Commander

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Messenger

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Two from command take on game shows

New Orleans test coordinator a contestant on Jeopardy and St. Louis operations officer spins the wheel ... page 32

Who is this man's son?

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Sometimes you have to hook 'em to book 'em

Kris Wilson, Phoenix MEPS education services specialist, doesn't believe in telling fish stories about "the one that got away." Here she is seen fishing the Colorado River with Jim Cliburn, owner of Bubba's Fishing and Guide Service and counselor at Page High School. Cliburn was a believer in sophomore career testing. He posed quite a challenge to Wilson when she tried "gently and tactfully" to persuade him to test juniors instead. After their entertaining and memorable "first encounter," Cliburn saw it her way and Page High School decided that its 270 juniors, not sophomores, would best benefit from the ASVAB Career Exploration Program. By the way ... Wilson caught the only two fish of the day ... but the biggest was the Page Junior Class!



Military members from throughout the command participated in the late June change of command ceremony on the front lawn of the building that houses USMEPCOM Headquarters in North Chicago, Ill. *Photos by Art Heintz*

Yeary takes command



Col. Lon M. Yeary, U.S. Marine Corps (left) becomes the new commander of USMEPCOM as he accepts the unit colors from William J. Carr, acting deputy under secretary of defense for military personnel policy. Yeary is USMEPCOM's 14th commander.

With an audience of more than 250 looking on, Marine Col. Lon M. Yeary took command of the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command on June 29.

William J. "Bill" Carr, acting deputy under secretary of defense for military personnel policy, presided over the outdoor ceremony.

The day also marked the end of outgoing commander Col. David L. Slotwinski's 30-year Army career. This milestone was recognized earlier in the day at an indoor award and retirement ceremony hosted by Lt. Gen. Dennis D. Cavin, U.S. Army, former commander of the Army's Accessions Command. Slotwinski was awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal during the ceremony. His USMEPCOM tour began in July 2002.

Representatives of Eastern Sector (USMEPCOM) which is colocated with the command headquarters, Western Sector (USMEPCOM), headquartered in Aurora, Colo., and Navy Band, Great Lakes participated in the ceremony.

Immediately following the ceremony, Carr joined Yeary and his wife, Julia, in receiving each guest at a reception for the new commander. Dignitaries included Lt. Gen. Cavin, Dr. Curtis L. Gilroy, director of accession policy, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, promotable Col. Peter M. Vangel, U.S. Army, deputy commanding general, U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Fort Knox, Ky., and North Chicago, Ill., Mayor Bette Thomas.



Pomp and Circumstance

An audience of more than 250 attend the USMEPCOM change of command. Bill Carr, acting deputy under secretary of defense for military personnel policy, presided over the ceremony (center, right). Incoming USMEPCOM Commander, Col. Lon Yeary cuts the ceremonial cake with his wife, Julia (left).

Yeary on ...

USMEPCOM's newest boss talks about life, family and big changes on the horizon

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

There's a new sheriff in town, but it's high noon at the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command headquarters and Marine Col. Lon Yeary is nowhere around.

He was supposed to be back in his office for an 11 a.m. interview with the *Messenger*, but a previous appointment somewhere else in the building is running almost an hour behind.

When he finally returns and we're told to come over, the organization's newest commander — and the first Marine in the top spot here since 1991 — is sitting behind his wooden desk — a desk that looks somehow smaller next to his 6-foot, 200-pound frame. Besides a family picture and a can of Diet Coke, there's a two-inch stack of red folders and papers for his review and signature front and center on his desk. He has a pen in hand, silver-framed glasses perched low on his twice-broken nose, and a no-time-for-interruptions look on his face. As these things go, one might expect the planned hour-long interview to get bumped to another day on the calendar so the man could get a lunch bite and catch up on work before his 1 p.m. meeting with someone else.

But spend a few minutes with this 26-year Marine veteran who recently took command, and you get the feeling he's not the type to put something aside. To call him a bulldog Marine would be cliché. But to call him anything else would just be wrong.

"C'mon in," he commands.

He raises an eyebrow, a nonverbal to get to the point. We tell him we have a lot of questions, and some are going to be tough. No

disrespect intended, but people want to know more about the man and what he's going to do for USMEPCOM, and the only way to do that is with a no-holds-barred interview.

"Have a seat," he says.

For the next hour, that lunch forgotten along with the stack of papers on his desk, he converses candidly about a wide range of issues, from his childhood and relationship with his father, to his leadership philosophy, and hot button issues affecting the command.

The sheriff takes off his glasses, swivels in his plush, leather chair and says, "OK, let me have it."

Messenger: What was your childhood like?

Yeary: "I grew up with a lot of fishing — a lot of fishing. All the holidays, and birthdays and Christmases had fishing themes — whether it be shirts, gadgets, electronic gadgets, fishing gear, it always had a fishing theme. I have fishing licenses in Illinois and Wisconsin. Our family vacations were around fishing. We'd go to a resort or cabin for a week in northern Wisconsin, and also Michigan and Ohio.

"My father has property in central Wisconsin and we just had a family reunion. Part of each family reunion is the annual fishing contest. We have a trophy for the first fish, biggest fish and most fish. My son got the trophy for most fish — 48 fish in four hours. These were mostly small fish, mostly blue gills, but he got two bass and one bullhead."

Yeary, 48, grew up not far from where he now works. He was born in Chicago, Ill., and at age 7, moved to the western suburbs of Glen



Ellen. Today he lives in Kenosha, Wis. His backyard kisses a wooded bike path and running trail that runs through the city.

He and his wife, Julia, have been married 15 years. He first met her while he was a helicopter pilot in Kaneohe, Hawaii, and his commander told him to prepare a predeployment brief for his squadron. Yeary went to the family services center to get information. That's where he met Julia, who helped him put the briefing together, but the two didn't marry until eight years later. They now have two children – Jaclyn, 13, and Lon Andrew, 8. It's not unusual to see the colonel at the ball field cheering on his children.

His is a close-knit family – a trait instilled in him years ago. Yeary comes from a family of four sisters and two brothers. His parents, both 76, still live in Illinois, and the family visits often. His dad always took an interest in his son's life – whether it was photography or wrestling – and he speaks fondly of those childhood memories.

Messenger: How did your father influence you growing up?

Yeary: “My dad has always been the leader of the family. My mom was a stay-at-home mom. Dad worked as a printer for a large portion of his life and then he became a teacher and taught printing and photography at a junior college. My dad stressed education. He had run away from home and dropped out of high school. He went back to school when I was in elementary school. My dad went back and got his GED so he had his high school degree. Then he started junior college, so when I started 8th grade, he was getting his associate's degree. Ultimately he went on to get his bachelor's and master's. When I was in high school, he was still going to college to get a master's degree.

“My sister was taking printing in college and he didn't like the way the teacher was doing things. He decided he could do things better than they could. That's when he decided to go back and get his degree in teaching. He became a print shop teacher. I can remember in high school, he'd throw me two rolls of film and say, ‘This week's assignment is to shoot two rolls of black and white. You take the pictures, and when you're done, we'll develop them.’

“And we sat in the bathroom, rocking that tank in the wash basin, developing that film. Later, he said, ‘Let's get a dark room. You put 50 bucks in, I'll put 50 bucks in, and we'll buy an enlarger. We were down in the basement developing pictures. We'd go down there and we'd go all night long. We'd start Friday about 10 o'clock and start developing pictures, and come out of the darkroom at 6 or 7 in the morning when the light started creeping in the windows.’

A young Lon Yeary had big plans after high school, but it didn't involve a military uniform. He grew up participating in baseball, wrestling and football, breaking his nose twice on the gridiron. Wrestling was his big sport, and his ticket to the big time. But when his plans went awry, a coach and a college roommate during his freshman year helped set his career in motion.

Messenger: What made you want to become a Marine?

Yeary: “I got into the Naval Academy because of wrestling. I was a wrestler in high school. I wanted to be a state champion and then a national champion. But then I only took 7th in state. I wasn't a state champion. I never applied to any schools. I was so confident I was going to be the state champion and Iowa — which at the time was the best wrestling school in the nation — was going to come



“My dad stressed education. He had run away from home and dropped out of high school. He went back to school when I was in elementary school. When I was in high school, he was still going to college to get a master's degree.”



“Carl Jordan was of the opinion that if you're not a Marine ... you're not staying in his room. He was the guy, when you talked to him, you wanted to follow him. So Carl said being a Marine is a good thing, so I'm gonna be a Marine.”



“I like to cut wood, plant trees, move dirt around, do outdoor activity things. I have no objection to moving wheelbarrows of dirt around or cutting grass or raking leaves or chopping trees or trimming trees, planting gardens.”

Yeary on ...

Continued from Page 7

along and draft me. But then I took 7th, and it changed the plans. Here I was, sitting late in my senior year without ever having applied to a school. The coach at the Naval Academy sent me a postcard and said, 'Tell me how you did.' I went to the Naval Academy and I wrestled at the Naval Academy. My plebe year, I had two other roommates. One of them was a Marine named Carl Jordan. He was an enlisted Marine who went to the Naval Academy. And Carl Jordan was of the opinion that if you're not a Marine ... you're not staying in his room. You have to go down the hall or something. Carl was a very impressive guy. He did terrible academically, but he had leadership skills. He was the guy, when you talked to him, you wanted to follow him. So Carl said being a Marine is a good thing, so I'm gonna be a Marine. So I ultimately selected the Marine Corps."

Yeary started his career as a helicopter pilot, flying the CH-46 in Hawaii, and then became an instructor pilot in Pensacola,

Fla. He was named the Training Air Wing 5 instructor of the year in 1986. Then he left the cockpit to get a master's degree in computer science from the Naval postgraduate school in Monterey, Calif. He eventually got another master's degree from the Marine Corps and Staff College.

Before becoming commander, he served as USMEPCOM's Inspector General since September 2002. He also served as the commander's right-hand man, filling in as the deputy commander and chief of staff from November 2003 to March 2004 when Maurice Buchanan departed for another job.

As for his buddy, Carl Jordan, he didn't do so badly for himself. He graduated from the academy, did 20 years in the Corps, retired as a major and now flies for a major airline. He was in the audience during the June 29 ceremony when Yeary took command from Army Col. David L. Slotwinski.

Messenger: During your change of command ceremony, Bill Carr, the acting deputy under secretary of defense for military personnel policy, called you a Mensa linebacker. What did you think of that?

Yeary: "I was flattered, but I'm not Mensa. I don't consider myself Mensa. I consider myself pretty blue collar. I'm a work hard, play hard, just-get-it-done kind of guy. I think I can hold my own in an academic environment if I have to. I don't consider myself an academic. I sometimes frown at those people who use those 25-cent words and try to talk down to me or impress me with how articulate they can be. I was flattered, but I think I'm a pretty average guy."

The commander isn't a bacon-and-eggs guy, either. He's been trying to watch his weight "because of the Marine Corps thing." He said he doesn't eat many breakfasts unless he's visiting one of the MEPS. Then he eats what the applicants eat. Otherwise, he normally grabs a nutritional bar for his first meal of the day. He likes to leave the office for lunch, but since becoming commander, hasn't found much time for that. So instead, he brings in a salad or a sandwich and eats at his desk.

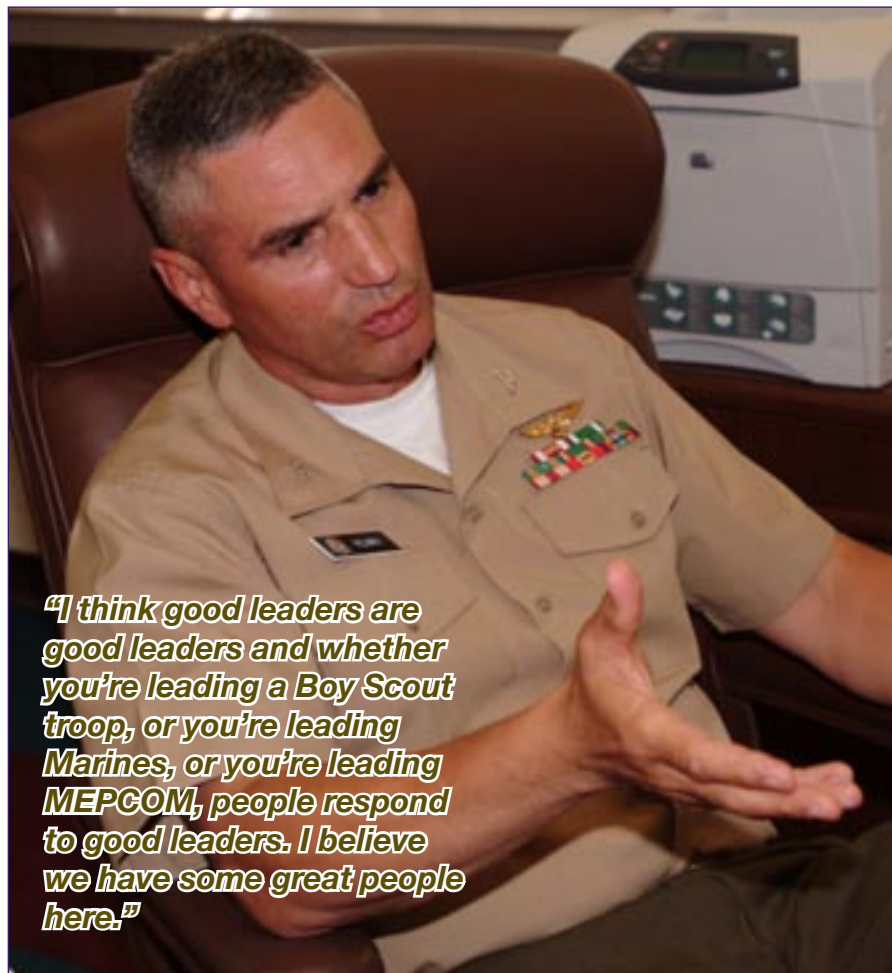
Messenger: What's a typical day for you like?

Yeary: "Depends on the day. Some days I get up early and do PT. Some days I don't. I usually get up about 4:45. I usually go do a Marine Corps (physical fitness test workout), which is three miles, pull-ups and sit-ups. I try to alternate it because I have had some problems with my knees where I will do the Nordic Track or ride the bike, so I don't beat my knees up.

"I try to be here to work no later than 7 o'clock depending on what's going on. I frequently come in earlier, but 7 is a good average. Sometimes I leave here by 6 o'clock, 1800ish. When I was down in IG and would get busy, I'd stay here until 8 or 9 at night. Depends on what I'm doing. I try not to come in here on Saturdays. The (information technology) guys have developed some tools so I can work on line. I would prefer to stay home and work on a computer on weekends because I have two kids and a wife. Even though I'm probably more efficient in the office, I can still knock stuff out there."

Messenger: You say you work hard and play hard. What do you do when you get out of the office?

Yeary: "You can see me at the ball diamond. My daughter plays softball, and my son plays baseball. I go to judo and watch them perform in their sports. I like to ride bikes. Yesterday, just so happens I was home by 1900, so I went for a bicycle ride with my son. I enjoy fishing and my dad has that property in central Wisconsin, so I like to go up there, cut wood, plant grass, plant trees,



"I think good leaders are good leaders and whether you're leading a Boy Scout troop, or you're leading Marines, or you're leading MEPCOM, people respond to good leaders. I believe we have some great people here."



move dirt around, do outdoor activity things. I have no objection to moving wheelbarrows of dirt around or cutting grass or raking leaves or chopping trees or trimming trees, planting gardens. We do a lot of that kind of stuff.”

Originally, an Air Force officer was chosen to be the next commander of USMEPCOM, but that person retired instead. The Air Force offered other candidates, as did the other services, but the Department of Defense wanted a seasoned professional, and Carr called Yeary who was quick to agree because, he said, in the Marine Corps, the ultimate is to lead. “We train and constantly strive to want to be in command. We want people to think like leaders,” he said. “To be in charge is a natural thing. You want to aspire to the next level.”

Messenger: You have a persona of being a tough Marine. But USMEPCOM is a lot different than a Marine unit. What qualifications do you have to run a joint operation?

Yeary: “My experiences in the IG, and then the six months I served as chief of staff gave me good exposure to the issues. I had pretty good mentorship with Mr. Buchanan and Colonel Slotwinski. That helped me to get up to speed with a lot of issues. I think that’s one of the reasons I got hired. (The Office of the Secretary of Defense) looked at who was available, and I was sitting right here. And Slotwinski looks at it and says, ‘Hey, Yeary’s been the chief, he’s a little more senior, he knows the issues, it’s a good fit.’ They agreed.”

Messenger: Is a joint command with all branches of the military and civilians, a lot different than dealing with just Marines?

Yeary: “Certainly there are some differences. The Marine Corps is very operational in nature. They have no civilians in the Marine Corps, but a lot of this stuff does apply. I think good leaders are good leaders and whether you’re leading a Boy Scout troop, or you’re leading Marines, or you’re leading MEPCOM, people respond to good leaders. I believe we have some great people here.”

Messenger: Ours is probably the only joint command that’s spread throughout the United States. Are there any unique challenges because the command is so unique?

Yeary: “Absolutely MEPCOM has unique challenges. Our distributed nature over 65 locations; the fact that we’re joint service; the fact that we have all these initiatives out there that we can’t control; the fact that we have so many customers and partners. It’s a big deal — we’ve got all recruit services, all

“PBD 712 is externally driven. Despite our arguments, we won’t be able to control it. 712 could have extensive impact, but the reason I can’t stop it is because it’s out of my realm.”



the training bases, we have the medical piece, the civilian agencies, all those people come to play, so it is unique. Trying to bring all those guys to agree on anything is hard. So it has a lot of unique challenges.”

Messenger: As the Inspector General, you saw the command’s shortcomings and problems. Is MEPCOM any different from other command’s out there?

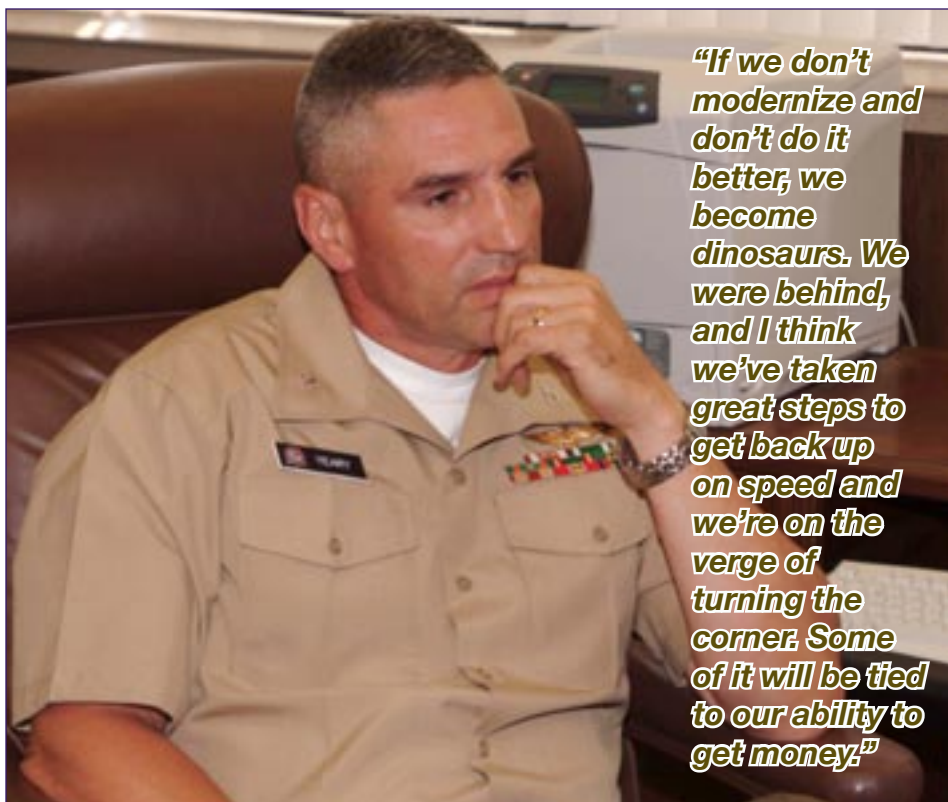
Yeary: “As the IG, I heard all the dirty laundry, so to speak. I listened to all the problems, all the personal complaints, operational complaints. Is that any different from any other organization? They all have their problems. Are we any different? We have some unique things and some similarities.

“Having the background in the IG and being aware of the command’s issues is to my advantage. Now just because I’m the commander and Slotwinski’s not, I don’t have any knit bag of solutions that he didn’t have. I don’t feel like I have a crystal ball that leads me to solutions. But the more background you have on any problem allows you to take all the facets of a problem and consider them when you’re trying to resolve them and come up with solutions.”

Messenger: How do you compare your leadership style to your predecessor?

Yeary: “I think I have lots of similarities to Colonel Slotwinski. I think Colonel Slotwinski was a visionary. He had great, long-range skills. I think my skills are in organization and execution, I think our skills compliment one another, and I’ll continue his initiatives. There is also an advantage to change, or someone with a different background. When you have a fresh set of eyes, you can look at the same problems differently.

“My Marine Corps style will be a little different. I’ve been through half the directorates and have another half to go. I feel like I know most of the people, and know most of the issues, but I want to make sure I look each of those guys in the face and say, ‘What do you do?’ So I know them and they know me a little bit. I’ve directed (Lt.) Col. (Sally) Hall (the executive officer), to kick me out and go around the headquarters a little bit and see them. It’s easy not to. You get busy with stuff. I’ve got a stack of stuff I need to sign. I’ve probably got 50 e-mails I need to address, and it’s easy to get in there and start pounding, but I want to get around.” ➡



"If we don't modernize and don't do it better, we become dinosaurs. We were behind, and I think we've taken great steps to get back up on speed and we're on the verge of turning the corner. Some of it will be tied to our ability to get money."

Yeary on ...

Continued from Page 9

Anyone paying attention to life at USMEPCOM knows Yeary is taking over at a critical time. Money is tight and the command wants more of it to complete initiatives and stay relevant. At the same time, there's talk that a lot of military positions will soon go away. All of this and more are on the commander's mind.

Messenger: The biggie going around the halls is Program Budget Decision 712 with the military to civilian conversion. Right now the Army is scheduled to convert 426 billets in fiscal 2005. The other services will also convert hundreds of billets in the next few years. It's obviously going to have a huge impact. Why not come in, cross it off and continue with the status quo?

Yeary: "There are two types of initiatives. There are those that are externally driven and those that are internally driven. PBD 712 is externally driven. That is being driven by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Despite our arguments, we won't be able to control it. I do think the plan that was devised was a little bit too aggressive and we should have

not civilianized as many billets. We were driven to some of that — it was forces that were external to USMEPCOM that caused it to get where it's at. 712 could have extensive impact, but the reason I can't stop it is because it's outside of my realm. I had Rich Harris (USMEPCOM's chief of manpower and force development) in here yesterday afternoon and we were talking about strategies that we could kind of be calm that, but it's well down the road, it's on its way, and I think it's going to be very difficult to turn around. Maybe we can win back some of the billets."

Messenger: According to the latest information, this phase out begins next year ...

Yeary: "I wouldn't say phase out. We aren't going to lose bodies. We're not supposed to. The intent is to transition from military to civilian."

Messenger: One rumor is that a lot of these military positions are going to be replaced with GS-4s and GS-5s, and the concern is we'll have people come in, we'll train them, and then they'll leave the command to get a promotion. So we're always playing catch-up on the learning curve and never getting ahead. If that's so, how will we deal with that?

Yeary: "There is a conversion and we are in the process of writing the position descriptions for those positions, and there are

a lot of GS-4, GS-5 positions. The first part is we have got to write position descriptions that accurately describe the responsibility the individual has so they will grade out accordingly.

"I would also agree that GS-4s turn over rather rapidly because it's kind of an entry-level position, and anyone who aspires to greater things is going to try to move up. If we did this thing right with this many civilian positions, hopefully we can entice them to move up into our organization. There should be some 7s and 9s, and ultimately some 11s, etc., that people can move into. One, we need to give them some upward mobility, and two, I think we need to train them and treat them in a fashion where they would like to stay, or where they'll bring other qualified people to our organization. We have to create an environment where people are attracted to us and not have people walking away saying, 'I hate it there, we should avoid it.'"

Messenger: What about the IT transformation, which is more of an internal drive. Why do we have to do it?

Yeary: "First, it's the right thing to do. It will improve the product we have, the quality and accuracy. We're going to get better data. We're going to do things faster. We're going to make it less expensive. There are a lot of advantages to it. I think it makes sense. IT is going to cut down on the windshield time the recruiters have. I think it's going to make a recruiters' life simpler, it's going to get a better product into the training bases as well. So it's the right thing to do. I think if we don't modernize and don't do it better, we become dinosaurs and we become obsolete. We become so expensive we won't have a job. They'll say, 'Why have these guys if they're so expensive and so hard to get along with? They can't be in sync with the rest of the Department of Defense.'"

Messenger: Last year, IT said we were doing a massive catch-up. When it comes to computer modernization, were we asleep at the wheel?

Yeary: "You're right, we were behind, and I think we've taken great steps to get back up on speed and we're right on the verge of turning the corner. Some of it will be tied to our ability to get money. The reason we got behind is because we didn't have the funds to do the tech refresh. We've identified the tech refresh, and we have been given a small portion of the money. But I think we are developing the optimization for proving we have the financial basis to do the modernization."

Some people who have worked with Yeary in the IG already know about the man,

and what type of commander he might be. For others, It's only natural at a military command for people to wonder what the new guy will be like, even before the new guy gets there. Yeary doesn't mind taking some of the guesswork out of the equation. But for the first time in the interview, he pauses, strokes his chin, and chooses his words carefully.

Messenger: Anytime a new commander comes in, people want to know what he's going to be like. If you had to describe yourself – your temperament, philosophy and leadership style – how would you do it?

Yeary: "I'm calm. Under normal circumstances I like to see whatever the problem is and think through it. Look at all the possible ways or alternatives to solve it, and come to a decision. Usually, I like to think about decisions. I don't like to make snap decisions where you come and say, "Listen! You have to decide whether we have to run this article or not and you've got five minutes to decide!" I don't like being put in those positions where you've got to make quick decisions and my tendency tends to be on the negative side with those short ones. If the answer is, 'Yes' or 'No,' and I'll never get the chance again, then the answer is, 'No.' I like to think through decisions. But I can be aggressive if I need to be.

"I believe in hard work. I have an analogy about the bank. There are deposits and withdrawals. You want to make sure you've got more deposits than withdrawals in your work ethics and stuff. I believe you need to earn your day's pay. None of us have got a free lunch. The fact that I have 26 years of service doesn't entitle me to a shorter day or less productivity. You've got to produce. You've got to earn your pay.

"I like broad concepts. I don't want to come down and tell you how to write this article. I like the concept that you're writing an article, but I'm not going to say it should be six paragraphs and I should have a photograph in the center. You produce the *Messenger*. The commander's intent is I want you to understand all parts of the problems so you know what I want if I were to be removed because I got shot in battle, or whatever. I want you to have enough brains so you can continue to execute in my absence. I believe I should train you to replace me so I can step out of the puzzle and you can still function.

"I think we have a relatively senior group (in the command). Generally speaking, we have E-5s and above who are relatively mature. I think everyone needs to maintain their educational and military standards and their technical expertise to the best of their abilities because they're going to leave MEPCOM and go back to their services, and

hopefully be productive. So you have to be competitive and work toward your promotion and stuff like that. You can't sit back, do nothing, and expect to get promoted."

Messenger: What's your philosophy about physical fitness and military standards in general?

Yeary: "There is no compromise. We are expected to uphold those standards and we should meet them. The better you score, that's good. I don't think we're all perfect. I've never had a perfect PFT score in my career. I could never run three miles in 18 minutes. I've met people who can do it. I can do the 20 pull-ups and all the sit-ups, but the best I've done on the run is 18:50, so I'm 50 seconds short of perfect. I think you have to adhere to the standards. That's what they're there for. I've always been relatively athletically inclined. It's been easy to meet the minimums and we should do the best we can.

"We all adhere to the military regulations, the (Uniform Code of Military Justice). Our standards are more stringent than the civilian side. We have weight standards; we have physical fitness standards. We have a different set of standards and are expected to uphold them. We are a reflection of our services and the Department of Defense. So when you're out in public, you want to wear the uniform properly. (You can't make political statements

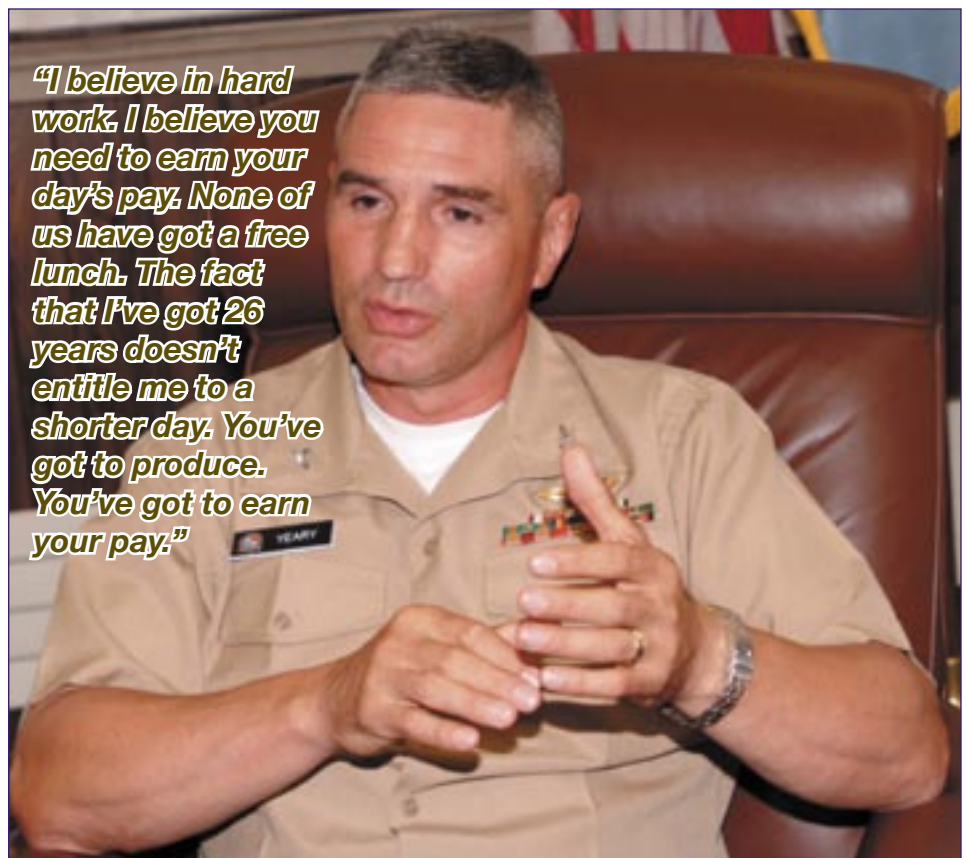
about a candidate) when you're wearing that uniform. It's different when you're wearing that (military) outfit, compared to when we're out at the ball diamond and we're both in blue jeans and T-shirts. We do represent our services and we do have to adhere to those standards."

Messenger: Do you see getting USMEPCOM out in more organizational settings outside of the office?

Yeary: "I do. I'm having the directors and deputy directors to my house Thursday night. This is really a team building effort to bring everybody together to build a team, so yeah, I'm going to try to do that and not just at the directorate level, but all of us. We're going to try. Maybe we'll go out golfing. We'll go out there early in the morning or Saturday, whatever. I'm not saying I'm going to take off in the middle of the day to golf, but we're going to try to get these guys out there and do some things."

Messenger: Anything else you'd like to address to sum it up?

Yeary: "I wanted the job, I'm excited to be here, and we've got a lot of things to accomplish, and a lot of opportunities here.



Goodbye, hello ...

USMEPCOM bid farewell Aug. 18 to Sgt. Maj. J. Kelly Fain, and welcomed aboard Master Chief Petty Officer William Vermillion in a Change of Responsibility ceremony on the front lawn of command headquarters. An enlisted formation and the Navy band was on hand for the new enlisted chapter. Fain and Vermillion (right) walk to front and center of the formation before the sergeant major salutes commander Col. Lon Yearly (below) one more time before handing the enlisted reigns to the master chief. Vermillion comes to the post from Eastern Sector headquarters, while Fain is now taking over as the command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Soldier Support Institute in Fort Jackson, S.C.



Our freedoms bind us together

**By Command Master Chief Petty Officer William Vermillion
USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Adviser**

It is an honor and privilege to serve and lead the enlisted men and women of USMEPCOM.

Since reporting aboard, I have been impressed with everyone's keen sense of pride in command, professionalism in work ethic, and commitment to the mission. The everyday life of MEPCOM Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians defines our motto, "Freedom's Front Door." We continue to remain focused on improving our practices to ensure the U.S. Armed Forces receives the most qualified applicants into our fighting forces.

One of the fun things about being a command master chief is walking about the decks of each MEPS and talking with USMEPCOM team players — team players who are great Americans who make a difference each and every day. As I talk with each person, I'm reminded that Americans are a people who have



USMEPCOM's newest senior enlisted adviser addresses the crowd at the change of responsibility ceremony.

come from every corner of the globe in pursuit of a most noble and remarkable vision — that in this land, men and women could live in freedom and liberty with their God-given rights respected. It is a common creed, not common ancestral roots, which binds us together. That creed was best expressed in the Declaration of Independence, which announced, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

You have every right to be proud of yourselves, because every USMEPCOM member faithfully continues to protect the freedoms we cherish as Americans.

As we sail ahead into the future, I will keep each of you in my thoughts and prayers. I encourage you to always look at the cup as half full, not half empty. Encourage one another to support your local Family Support Groups, get involved in community projects and always make training a priority. We are the ambassadors of the most powerful Armed Forces the world has ever known.

My wife, Lois, and I thank you for your warm welcome and look forward to serving you. We could not complete the mission without your team spirit.

See you about the decks.

Lowering Consult Costs

—Common sense and knowledge are a must

By Chief Petty Officer Eugenia O'Bannon
NCOIC, Medical Section
San Antonio MEPS

As more applicants come in with significant medical histories, consult costs are on the rise. But it's not just about dollars and cents. Lowering consults (without, of course, forsaking quality) also frees up time and manpower that could be better allocated elsewhere.

The Chief Medical Officer's role

The chief medical officer is one of the most critical players in the MEPS. The decisions they make set the tone for the rest of the day. Generally, CMOs with a general medical background (family medicine or internal medicine) obtain fewer consults than those with subspecialty backgrounds (where more things are outside their specialties). If your CMO is eager to learn new things, training (such as how to evaluate knee post-Anterior Cruciate Ligament surgery) from local specialists can allow them to qualify/disqualify certain conditions themselves rather than requiring a consult. If your CMO is comfortable removing earwax, they now are allowed to do so. Also, unless the applicant needs a Valsalva maneuver for Air Force and Army Airborne, has ear symptoms or decreased hearing, earwax need not be removed. Very few things require automatic consultation. When in doubt, you can discuss the case with the sector surgeon. Many MEPS get psychological consults for a history of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, which is unnecessary — one only needs documentation that the applicant is off medications, and is doing well in school or at work.

Fee-Basis Physicians' Contributions

Six trained and experienced fee-basis physicians amount to more than 200 years of medical knowledge and expertise. Sitting down routinely with your FBPs and discussing medical cases will keep everyone on the same sheet of music, and may eliminate "reinforcement" consults.

Occasionally the profiling physician is seeking a second opinion and requests a consult that neither changes the profile, nor adds any beneficial information — conferencing with your fellow doctors can also serve this purpose.



New Recruiter Orientation

This orientation is a useful tool to start your recruiters off on the right foot. Whether you hold it monthly or quarterly, equipping your recruiters with all of the knowledge and information they need to know in order to process their applicants efficiently, on their first visit to the MEPS, is

beneficial to all. Discussing the prescreening process and the value of Letters of Medical Documentation can also contribute to a lower consult cost. If the applicants have, or had, a medical problem, yet they have relatively current medical documentation at home, it may eliminate the need for a specialty consultation.

Civilian Networking

Network Medical Services is not the only way to obtain specialty consultations; resources are available in the civilian community. A few phone calls or networking in the right areas may uncover a valuable asset. At one particular MEPS, an in-house radiologist worked for a flat rate of \$200 per week. He reviewed all of the MEPS' X-rays, which expedited the average processing time and saved the MEPS money. Also, one can get manifest refractions from an optometrist often at a fraction of the cost of an ophthalmologist.

Military Resources

According to Army Regulation 40-400, applicants for enlistment or re-enlistment in the Armed Forces (including applicants for enlistment in the reserve components) are authorized care in Army Military Treatment Facilities. MEPS who are located near an Army MTF might save dollars by coordinating with them to obtain specialty consults.

Most Army MTF's are willing to provide services, if resources permit. This is not only a very cost-effective resource, but MEPS are generally able to receive results that same day or the next, due to the close proximity of the facility.

Transfo

— Military Entrance

By Christine Parker
Messenger Editor

Strap on your seat belts because the world's going "virtual" and, in time, so will military processing. It's not just amazon.com and eBay anymore. Remember library card catalogs? They're antiques, replaced by virtual libraries — entire texts available online, for viewing or downloading. Museums are using laser scanning to make digital copies of ancient clay tablets and then using the data to steer robotic machinery to cut out an exact replica of the original. What was once static can now be recreated in another place or time.

There are online virtual tours of vacation spots, universities, homes ... Doctors perform online medical diagnosis of symptoms, illnesses, diseases and psychiatric disorders. Although nothing "electronic" can measure up to the human element of a task, people are finding new ways to do things we've done the same way for decades.

Gone are the days when college students stood in long registration lines. Students may never step foot on campus before their first class. In some ways, the process that brings about military entrance is similar. Records must be checked. Tests must be taken. Facts must be proven. Qualifications must be met.

Virtual military processing lies somewhere between today's technology and that shown in this summer's blockbuster, "I, Robot." We're not suggesting robotic soldiers yet ... rather, the ability to enlist a person into the military anytime, anywhere. Future applicants will enter "Freedom's Front Door" to MEPS through the Internet's electronic portals, rather than today's physical doorways framed in brick and mortar.

"Can't do that," you say? Realistically we don't need to worry about the human element of military processing disappearing for quite some time ... not during our careers, anyway. But in the future, young men or women may fly or drive straightaway from their home to basic training.

How will we get there? Through transformation.

The Big Picture

Transformation means reinventing how we do business at USMEPCOM. We are reengineering the command's business processes for medical examining, aptitude testing, and other processing activities, including security screening. The goal is to provide faster, better service to recruiters, trainers, applicants, to DOD organizations who rely upon processing information, and, of course, to the American taxpayers.

This doesn't happen overnight — just ask Rick Cox, who's been tasked full time to help lead the command's Information Technology transformation.

He says you can see the big picture of transformation in the Commander's strategic vision, goals, and campaign plan which we have been pursuing for several years. Overall transformation is guided by a Balanced Scorecard (TM) approach to strategic management. We improve our products — qualified recruits and related data — by improving business practices, leveraging technology, and transforming the workforce and workplace culture. One key strategic initiative, the A-Z Business Process Review, led to 49 recommendations approved by the five Recruiting Service commanders.

Technology

The technology thrust of transformation is helping us further understand customer needs and develop a well-documented, approved, and funded way ahead. "Our emerging IT modernization strategy will produce a whole new enlistment processing system," Cox said. "Our current system — the MEPCOM Integrated Resource System — is antiquated. It is hard to change and manage. It doesn't meet our needs or our customer's because it is mired in mid-20th century business practices. We have been incrementally updating and patching it for nearly 10 years." Cox explained that MIRS was not funded

Information

Processing Goes Virtual

completely, and therefore, the command never fully fielded all its required capabilities.

“Now we have a chance to get it right,” he said. “The IT transformation will enable us to create a system that operates more efficiently and cost-effectively, and with built-in agility. It will help us keep pace with the fast-changing requirements of today’s strategic and operational business environment.”

In the short range, the next 18-24 months, the command will work to catch up on some of the deferred improvements to MIRS, including improved ability to exchange data with recruiting and training. Pilot tests of electronic personnel and medical records will help move us toward the goal of paperless processing using capabilities of the Web and Internet.

“We must revolutionize our capability to exchange data and warehouse it,” Cox said. “Recruiters actually send data electronically which we print and make paper packets that applicants carry to basic training. We generate tons of paper. It would be much better if we could send them with an electronic record — or send data to the training stations directly.”

In addition to electronic records and testing, another transformation goal is to reduce the time it takes to process an applicant. Currently an applicant visits MEPS an average of three times before leaving for basic training. “One of our goals is to reduce the number of an applicant’s trips to MEPS. One of the ways we can do this is through more efficient prescreening.”

Other aspects of processing need to move forward as well. “We can use data better to manage field and Headquarters operations. We must develop more advanced analytics capability based on high quality accession and cost data. I think most of us would agree you can’t improve what you can’t measure with a

useful level of confidence and precision. The bottom-line goal is efficient and effective, low-cost, one-stop applicant processing,” Cox said.

Automating medical processing forms and digitizing paper applicant records, for example, will foreshadow the new era of fully electronic medical and personnel records. Paperless processing will let us avoid yearly costs of creating and handling millions of sheets of paper that burden current processing

“The IT transformation will enable us to create a system that operates more efficiently and cost-effectively, and with built-in agility. It will help us keep pace with the fast-changing requirements of today’s strategic and operational business environment.”

activities. Internet-based processing activities will help us better prescreen applicants before they report for MEPS processing. We can dare to envision a future with virtual processing. But we must leap some daunting hurdles on the path to that vision.

“We get excited about technical solutions because technology is fun,” Cox said. But there’s a less exciting side. “It’s frustrating to slow down and go through the complex acquisition process by which our requirements are documented and approved.”

“That process is expensive and time-consuming. But it’s necessary. It helps ensure we get the requirements right and comply with acquisition law. It also increases the likelihood our IT modernization will succeed.”

“USMEPCOM’s future enlisted processing system will save the command and the accession community a lot of money in the long run. Plus, we will be able to do our jobs better.”



Leadership Role

USMEPCOM has a legitimate leadership role in our lane of the accession community. We provide qualified applicants and information to the Department of Defense. “Strategically, we’re at the center of the process. Our innovations will create more efficient ways of doing business at USMEPCOM, and support our customers own initiatives for business process reengineering,” Cox said.

“We’re not trying to transform our customers’ processes; we’re transforming ours where our systems bump together. We intend to deliver what they need,” Cox explained. “We want to capture and exchange processing data more efficiently. The better we do our jobs, the better the entire DOD accession system works.”

There are some inherent challenges in embracing a vision for virtual applicant processing. “For example, we have experimented with using physicians who were not directly affiliated with a MEPS. We also use fee-basis providers for consults. There are certain health conditions our staff MEPS physicians are trained to look for, things they’ve experienced at detecting. They have to apply medical judgment based on their specialized experience with military applicants. Some things you can look at very objectively, like the hearing and eye tests. But the CMO must ask questions that will help draw out information from the applicant — so they can render a professional judgment based on the whole picture. Today’s non-affiliated physicians lack the background to make effective judgements about applicant’s medical fitness for military service. We’re talking more than sports physicals here.”

Will the medical portion of virtual processing be possible someday? “I personally believe that it will become possible,” Cox said, “but that’s well into the future, and medical officers will always need to understand the unique requirements of military service.”

Acquisition Process

“We are competing for resources with the entire DOD community,” Cox said. “We have to show that, by investing in MEPCOM’s transformation, we will provide a very strong return on investment — we will make the accession process better and save money and time for everyone.”

The command is focusing on Milestone A in the DOD acquisition process. “The purpose of milestone A is to very clearly define functional requirements.” Milestone A is a point at which a decision authority looks at the requirement documents and renders a judgment on them. They will say either, “Yes, you have a valid, viable program and it deserves to be funded and supported” or “No, you don’t.” If the answer is “Yes,” we get to continue with program development.

Cox highlights the importance of determining functional requirements. “One of the mistakes many organizations make — and we struggle with too — is leaping to a technical solution before nailing the requirements. When we do that it costs a lot more time and money because we can get hung up on trying to implement a solution that doesn’t fit our real requirements.”

The USMEPCOM team hopes to see a final decision about Milestone A in early 2005. They will then continue defining the requirements and move toward Milestone B, which further defines the requirements and will likely include further pilot testing. After reaching Milestone B, the command will begin developing “the approved system.”

Leadership

Leadership is a vital ingredient in transformation. “We had a great handoff from Colonel Slotwinski to Colonel Yearly,” Cox said. “Colonel Slotwinski opened the door, broke trail, created the relationships at a higher level and sold the vision. Colonel Yearly also helped create those relationships. He has a clear vision for leading us forward. The clean transition helped maintain the momentum of the program. Colonel Yearly assigned the Chief of Staff, Dave O’Brien, to oversee the transformation team.”

“This has been a team effort,” Cox emphasized. “We’ve had strong participation from the directorates and the MEPS and sectors.” Seasoned personnel have been assigned to the team from Operations, Medical, Information Technology, Resource Management, and Program Analysis Directorates. Some other key leaders on this project include Ted Daniels (operations functional), Lt. Col. Robert Ruiz (medical functional), Dee Varga (resource management), Bill Armstrong (technical), and Candy Laing (strategic integration). Baltimore, Richmond, and Chicago MEPS have hosted DOD leaders invited to learn about the IT modernization. Kansas City and Phoenix MEPS have participated as well in determining requirements and offering insights based on their practical experience with USMEPCOM’s daily mission. We have support from key leaders in the DOD community who believe in the transformation vision.

“For transformation to succeed, we must do a good job of communicating within the command, with recruiters, trainers, and others in the accession community, to make sure that our requirements are the right requirements. We’re well on the way with that.”

“It’s because of the people helping that we can dare to believe we can pull this off,” Cox said. “We may create an elegant solution, great documentation, and get fully funded — but it is effective communication and leadership that will make us successful.”

Virtual World

Full virtual processing is beyond the scope of the current transformation. “But what we’re doing now is a huge step toward that vision,” Cox said.

Last year, after visiting New York MEPS, a noted futurist addressed the National Training Conference. He told the group that by 2020 only two MEPS tasks may require an on-site person: drawing blood and interviewing applicants to validate the decision to ship. He suggested that all other aspects of military processing could be done virtually. Advances in medical technology may make the blood draw unnecessary well before then.

The concepts are amazing ... and transformation can take us there.

Identical Bluesuiters

By 1st Lt. Dominic Mirabella
Jacksonville MEPS

It was the younger brother's idea to join, but the older brother quickly joined suit. Now both brothers — identical, that is — left together July 13 for Air Force basic training.

Kyle Pearson, whose seven minutes younger than his brother, Drew, convinced his older brother it was the best idea.

"Our mom kind of dragged us up to the recruiter just to see if we'd be interested in the Air Force or the Marine Corps," Kyle said. "I actually talked Drew into it. I told him there's nothing wrong with joining."

"My dad was in the Air Force and he talked about all the fun he had. It sounded like a good idea to me. I really feel like I need to get out and see the world. I also like to fish, so this is a great opportunity to find some other places to make a catch."

Drew's reasons for joining were a little different.

"I just want to get out of Florida and see the world," he said. "I've only seen three states in my life."

They'll add another state to that list since both brothers reported to basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

After basic, they both trained to be tactical aircraft maintenance specialists. "We like to turn a wrench," Kyle said. "I want to be a crew chief. It's a good job."



A general request

Maj. Gen. Wesley E. Craig Jr., commander of the 28th Infantry Division of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, made a special visit recently to the Harrisburg MEPS to enlist Nicholas D. Peterson into the guard. Peterson's stepfather, Sgt. Maj. Bradley Billett, has known the general for more than 20 years, and asked him to do the enlistment honors.



Captain brings in three sailors

Capt. David R. Arnold, Navy Recruiting Area commander for Area Eight, visited Feb. 4 the Navy liaison office of the Albuquerque MEPS. While there, the captain enlisted (left to right) Reuban Martinez, Gary Vallejo and Michael Garcia into the Navy. As the Area Eight's top recruiter, Arnold oversees Navy recruiting in Washington, Idaho, California, Arizona, Utah and New Mexico.



Cousins to brothers

Army Capt. Steven C. Edsall, the testing coordinator from the Syracuse MEPS, and Jason Hasenauer went from cousins to brothers in arms during a Feb. 11 ceremony at the MEPS. Edsall gave the enlistment oath to his cousin, and Hasenauer recently completed Army basic training.



Family ties

Army recruiter Staff Sgt. Jason Hunt poses with one of his recruits — and his brother-in-law, Victor Andiaarena, who shipped March 24 for Army basic training.

Mom-daughter stay blue together

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Karen and Nicole aren't just women in blue. The mother and daughter are both in the Air Force, and they re-enlisted together at a special ceremony at the Sioux Falls MEPS.

Senior Airman Nicole Davis from Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., raised her hand Feb. 19 to re-enlist for her second tour while Tech. Sgt. Karen McFadden, said the same oath and re-enlisted for her final four years in uniform.

"I was kind of nervous and my mom was crying," Davis said. "It was really a nice ceremony," Davis said.

She credits her mom for her joining the Air Force. Davis was 7 when McFadden left for basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Then she moved from base to base as her mother pursued her military career.

"I was 19 and working as a telephone operator at a hospital, when I start thinking about the Air Force," Davis said. "I just looked at how the life was, and how everyone was a big family. I loved living at the Air Force bases as a kid.

"I told my mother and she was happy for me. She said, 'Whatever you do, I support you, and I'm here for you.' I got the whole mom speech."

She also credits her mother for writing to her throughout basic training and always being there for advice.

"She gives me advice on everything. From supervisors, to how I should iron my uniform. She's always there for me," she said.

That ought to make mom feel good because she feels the same way about her daughter.

"She's my friend," McFadden said. "We can talk about anything. You know how it is when you go home on leave and you can't talk to anyone because they don't know what you're talking about. She's not a colleague. We're very much closer than that. She reminds me about what it's like to be an airman. We have a bond. And I'm so proud of her."

McFadden moved from Minot Air Force Base, N.D., to the Sioux Falls MEPS last



At the same ceremony, mom re-enlists for her final tour and daughter re-enlists for her second.

year. When it was time for Davis to re-enlist, she wanted to get closer to her family. Offutt is only two hours away. While Davis was house hunting in February, she made the trip to the MEPS, and Col. Sheila Scanlon, the Western Sector commander, performed the ceremony.

"It was awesome," McFadden said. "It was a really neat ceremony. It was her first re-enlistment and my last. It's something I'll remember forever."

Not your everyday, average I-joined-the-military story ...

By Lt. Lee Levells
Memphis MEPS

This is a story with one of those plot twists when you least expect it, so pay attention.

His great grandfather was a fighter pilot in the Army Air Corps, and retired from the Air Force in the 1950s.

Both his grandfathers served in the Air Force during the Korean and Vietnam War.

His dad, the operations superintendent of the Memphis MEPS, has more than 20 years in an Air Force uniform.

Add to that an aunt who just retired from the Air Force, and an uncle and cousin still in the Air Force, it only seemed natural that Christopher Yerkes would join the Air Force, right?

Wrong.

He joined the Marines. No, that's not the plot twist. Here's the plot twist – after delay enlisting in the Corps, after this story was written about how he bucked the whole family tradition to join the Corps, he

changed his mind and decided to join the Air Force after all.

"His mom had a lot to do with that one," said his dad, Senior Master Sgt. Charles Yerkes, who was reassigned earlier this summer to Patrick Air Force Base, Fla. "He had a couple friends who joined the Marines under the buddy program, then they changed their mind. But mom was the one who really broke him and got him to go into the Air Force.

"I told him he could do either one and it wouldn't matter to me. As long as he served, as long as he had a plan," Sgt. Yerkes added. "I'm proud of him."

Actually, Christopher's plan to join the military was a plot twist all in itself. He told his family he wanted to go to college and become a teacher.

"I still want to teach some day, hopefully in the (Department of Defense Dependent Schools) system overseas," Christopher said.

He's a product of the DODDS system since he lived at Sembach Air Base, Germany, with his family.

"What I don't want is to look back 20 years from now and feel like I missed out on something," he said. "I've been privileged as a military brat to have all the opportunities I've been given and to experience more than other kids my age. I've climbed the Eiffel Tower, seen the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, and rode a gondola through the canals in Venice. My father has always told us that part of our responsibilities as an adult is to give back more than you take. With all I've been given, I have a responsibility to give back, and feel the best way is to join the (military)."

The Marines weren't thrilled with his change of heart, but it was a matter of filling out some paperwork, getting discharged from the Marine delayed enlistment program, and then enlisting in the Air Force.

If joining the Air Force isn't just an homage to the old man, Chris took it one step further. He left Sept. 2 for basic training. He picked the day special because his dad first left for his basic training on Sept. 2, 1977.

Memphis reaches 200-plus educators at awards banquet

by Lt. Lee Level
Memphis MEPS

The Memphis MEPS and Interservice Recruitment Committee “dream team” continued to strengthen their local military-educator bond when they combined music, dance, food, awards and camaraderie at a cosponsored Center of Influence awards banquet for 207 educators.

As in years before, J. B. Smiley, ASVAB program manager, narrated the event, this year along with Lt. Cassandra Dinwiddie, MEPS test control officer. Some counselors, principals and others came from 200 miles away to attend the event.

The event reached out to the community in numerous ways. After the playing of the national anthem, Fairley High School Junior ROTC Color Guard presented the colors. Holy Springs High School Concert and Show Choirs — state and national award winners — performed renditions of songs, “We Are The World,” and “I Can Make a Difference” during dinner.

During the awards portion of the event, IRC members presented certificates of appreciation to counselors and principals who supported ASVAB testing and recruiting at their schools. Memphis MEPS Commander, Maj. Spence Baldwin, and Smiley presented special awards to outstanding ASVAB supporters, Paula Green, a counselor at Wooddale High School and Debra Mattox, a teacher at Southside High School. IRC Chairman, Lt. Col. Bethel presented special awards to Counselor retirees.



Some of the more than 200 educators who attended a recent Center of Influence event pose for a photo. The Memphis MEPS and the Interservice Recruitment Committee hosted the event.

The West Tennessee Counseling Association presidents presented a plaque to Baldwin and Bethel in appreciation for ASVAB testing, recruiting and other services provided for counselors and students.

Lt. Col. Cynthia Brown served as guest speaker on behalf of all branches of the military. In her speech entitled, “The United States Armed Forces — What’s in it for me?” she highlighted the important role educators have in supporting the Armed Forces through ASVAB testing and recruiting in their schools. Brown also summarized how testing helps assess career interests and how the Armed Forces offer numerous education and training programs.

Dr. Robert Crawford, a counseling professor and civilian speaker expounded on his personal military experience. He told educators that the military offers rewarding careers and a highly recommended career exploration program.

To bring the evening to a close, Grammy nominee and soulful artist, Julia Carter sang, “The Greatest Love of All,” and The Andrew Sisters sang popular favorites like Chattanooga Choo Choo, Bugle Boy, and others. The IRC members danced along with educators and the Andrew Sisters to seal camaraderie and cooperation among educators and the military.

COMMUNITY

El Paso adopts local nursing home

The El Paso MEPS adopted the residents of Nazareth Hall Nursing Home, a facility located in a destitute area of central El Paso.

Beginning in November 2003, El Paso MEPS personnel began volunteering time with the home’s seniors and residents.

During a recent visit to the home, El Paso MEPS personnel were greeted by the residents and staff with joy, smiles and enthusiastic applause. Chief Petty Officer David Lally and Sgt. Luis Campos began their afternoon by challenging a couple of the locals to a few games of BINGO, while Chief Master Sgt. Michael Smith and Sgt. 1st Class Cecilia Ballard spent time outside talking with other residents. Meanwhile, Sgt. Antonio Mascorro, Staff Sgt. Cynthia Cross and Tech. Sgt. Vicky Lewis played board games with nursing home staff and residents. As the afternoon progressed, Sgt. Millet,

Mascorro and a few visiting family members joined residents and staff in a game of Scrabble. The nursing home staff supported the festivities throughout the day by serving snacks and giving away prizes to the winners of each game.

“It was great making someone’s day by spending some time with them,” Cross said. Lewis was amazed by some of the resident’s mental sharpness. “Many possess such a wealth of knowledge and history it was like having the world at your fingertips,” she said. Lally was particularly taken with an elderly veteran who shared some personal Korean War stories of General Chester Puller.

“We hope our contribution will have a lasting and meaningful impact on the families of this community for years to come,” said Maj. Michael Matthews, El Paso MEPS commander.

Honolulu MEPS meets with American Samoa leaders

During Honolulu MEPS' most recent processing trip to American Samoa, the commander, test control officer and education services specialist had the opportunity to meet with the Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa and brief him on USMEPCOM'S mission, their upcoming testing and processing deployments there and the results of the enlistment and recruiting efforts taking place in the South Pacific region.

The Honolulu MEPS has the unique mission of providing enlistment and student testing as well as enlistment processing to various islands. Specifically, they have oversight for the American Territories of Guam and American Samoa as well as other countries such as the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and the Compact Agreement Countries of Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau.

Honolulu MEPS makes four processing and four testing trips per year to American Samoa with an average of more than 30 contracts written during every seven-day deployment. The American Samoan government continues to be a staunch supporter of the U.S. military and the opportunities it offers the young people of this far off territory.



Left to Right: 1st Lt. Jeff Lahman, Lieutenant Governor Sunia, Lt. Cmdr. Theresa Lewis, Honolulu MEPS commander, Steven Cook, Honolulu MEPS education services specialist, Representative Letuli.

What is American Samoa?: A group of five volcanic islands and two coral atolls located 2,600 miles south of Hawaii. It's a territory of the United States that the eastern Samoan islands of Tutuila, Aunu'u, and Rose; three islands (Ta'u, Olosega, and Ofu) of the Manu'a group; and Swains Island.

Land area: 77 square miles

Military connection: American Samoa became a territory in 1900. The Marines used the capital, Pago Pago, during World War II. It was also used as a coaling and Naval base. Ever since, the military ties have been strong. The Honolulu MEPS visits four times a year, with an average of 30 contracts written during each seven-day deployment.

It took a tragedy to see family around me

By Staff Sgt. Mickey L. Pearson
Knoxville MEPS

It took a tragedy for me to truly appreciate those around me — the family outside my immediate family — my coworkers who came together after my house was destroyed by a fire shortly before Christmas last year. We often may quietly believe or hope our friends and coworkers would lend a hand when something bad happens. I don't wonder. I know. And words can't express how thankful I am.

Things quickly spiraled from normal to very bad about 2:30 p.m. Dec. 10 when the fire started. Here it was a couple weeks before Christmas, and everything was gone — our possessions, and gifts that were already to be placed under a tree that was no longer there. Immediately upon hearing of

the fire, Staff Sgt. Evelyn Cooper collected more than \$130 to help my family and me. 1st Sgt. Ross Corbett coordinated with and then directed me to the American Red Cross, where they housed us in a local hotel for three days. The Red Cross also provided us a \$400 dollar credit voucher for food and clothing to be used in local stores. But that's not all. Later in the week, the Red Cross asked me for a list of toys my children, Jazzlyn and Junior, might like as Christmas presents. My wife and I were overcome with emotion and thanks as we listed about three toys for each. The Red Cross delivered those and about 10 more.

Everyone in the MEPS offered help, provided help or took time to see that my family and I were OK.

The support from the command, staff and liaisons was overwhelming. We lived in a hotel until about Dec. 23 when we got one more Christmas present — a government leased house to move into, just in time for the holidays. My wife's coworkers also made sure we were comfortable, donating 25 bags of clothing and countless items for our new home.

The experience was life changing. It was an ordeal, and we persevered. But it would have been nearly impossible without the kindness and generosity of those around us. I've already thanked many of them in person. Now I want to do it again for others to see. Thank you to my command for taking care of one of your own.

Your kindness will never be forgotten.

Lights! Camera! Surprise! You're on Maury!

New York NCO gets TV makeover

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Tech. Sgt. Kim Johndro took full advantage of her three-year tour at the New York MEPS — from the theater, to the Empire State Building, to the studio audience of the Montel Williams Show, Ricki Lake, and Change of Heart. So when word went out that Maury Povich was looking for a military woman for a makeover, she was ready.

"I said, 'Pick me! Pick me! Pick me!'" said the upbeat and effervescent staff sergeant who until recently worked in the MEPS medical section. "I've had fun on this assignment and have done all the touristy stuff! This has been a great assignment!"

Her colleague, Carmel Ponzi, a test coordinator from the MEPS, first got things rolling. Her daughter, Christine, is a producer for The Maury Povich Show. She called her mom when the show started planning a military makeover.

The show's staff called Johndro to let her know she was a finalist and asked a few questions. "They kept me on the phone for 45 minutes asking all kinds of questions!" she said. "They asked me what I wore every day. I told them (battle dress uniform). They asked me how many skirts I had. I said, 'Including my military blue skirt? One.' Since I work with almost all men and my last name is Johndro I even have a guy nickname. They call me Johnny around here. I wanted to be on the show so bad! I knew I was giving them good answers."

Unbeknownst to Johndro, she already made the cut.

The next day she was ordered to her feet as producers barged into the MEPS, cameras rolling.



Tech. Sgt. Kim Johndro beams as Maury's cameras surprise her on the job.

"Oh I was so excited!" she squealed. Johndro is perfect for this stuff. She squeals a lot.

The next day, Maury sent a taxi to bring her to Manhattan where they paid for her hotel and meal.

"I actually had tickets that same day to see Regis and Kelly!" she said.

She missed that show, but made out pretty good on Maury. First, Johndro came out in camouflage BDUs, her hair in a bun. While another show taped, an army of stylists went to work. Two hours later, Johndro came back out — her hair dyed and styled, a new dress, new shoes, and new make up. And she got to keep it all.

"She looked absolutely gorgeous!" Ponzi raved.

"It was a lot of fun!" Johndro exclaimed.

She doesn't just squeal. She exclaims a lot, too. She's really perfect for this stuff.

"I've kept some of their tips they gave me, and would do a lot more if I didn't have to still wear BDUs every day! At least I can say I was beautiful for a day. Unfortunately I can't have five people working for three hours every day on my hair and make up."

Johndro departed the MEPS in May for her new assignment with the Defense Courier Service in San Diego, Calif. She already knows how close she'll be to Los Angeles, and is planning on taking advantage of that assignment, too.

"Oh, I'm going to all the sitcom tapings like Everybody Loves Raymond! And the Price is Right! Oh, I would so love that! And Wheel of Fortune! I am so good at the Wheel. That would be great to get on that show!"

Don't be surprised to see Johndro on any of those shows. You can't miss her. She's the upbeat and effervescent one.



Baltimore
Lt. Col. Robert
Campbell

Background: Campbell still speaks in the southern twang and wisdom that underscores his east Tennessee upbringing.

Civilian education: He received two bachelor's degrees from Carson-Newman College, in Jefferson City, Tenn., in the same time it takes most people to earn one; and a master's in education from Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. "I didn't have a job, so my job was going to college," he said of his time at Carson-Newman. "My dad taught me my work ethic. He said, 'If it's your job to go to college, then go to college.' So I didn't take 12 hours a semester, I took 18 or 21. By the time I was done, I had enough for both (degrees)."

What's in his office: "First and foremost, I have a book called Lincoln on Leadership. In my opinion, he was probably one of the top three presidents in the history of our country, and you can learn some great leadership principles from that book. I have a copy of magazine about 9-11 on my coffee table to remind me what business we're in. It also reminds me of friends I've had in the Army who have been killed in 9-11 or since then, running down terrorists and people who would want to kill innocent men, women, and children."



Boston
Lt. Cmdr. Susanne
McNinch

Background: "I'm an Air Force brat, and I grew up traveling the world. I loved the lifestyle. I was born at Whiteman (Air Force Base, Mo.), moved to Vandenburg (Air Force Base, Calif.), then Susstenburg in Holland. From there we moved to Hawaii, and my dad retired in Florida." McNinch said the military lifestyle taught her how to make friends fast, and she still keeps in touch with all the friends she met along the way, particularly her best friend from the time she lived in Holland from age 10 to 13. "We still keep in touch, and it's ironic because we got married within a month of each other, and had our children a month from each other. It's amazing how our lives have paralleled each other."

Don't mess with her: She was the 1996 Atsugi Female Athlete of the Year. "I participated in all the intramural sports and excelled in a few of them," she said.

She and her husband, Bob, are big baseball fans, which makes the move to Boston even sweeter.

"We're excited to see the Boston Red Sox play," she said.

Favorite saying on Magic 8 ball answer: "'Maybe,' because it's full of possibility. I'm very much an optimist. I don't look for the negative in something. I always look for the positive."



Charlotte
Maj. Vicki
Johnson

Background: Johnson was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and spent her childhood training religiously in gymnastics.

"Besides school, that's what we did. We were always going to practice, working out and preparing for some meet."

Johnson was focused on making the 1984 Olympics, "but I went into the Army instead," she said. "I started putting things in perspective, but I don't regret my decision. If I had the opportunity to do it all over again, I would not change it."

Civilian education: One might say Johnson could be a poster child for getting ahead through perseverance and hard work. She enlisted and went into basic training three weeks after high school graduation, and went to night school until she amassed 60 credit hours. Today she has a bachelor's, master's and his working on her doctorate.

Hobbies: Listening to live jazz. Johnson has been to the world famous North Sea Jazz Festival in The Hague, Netherlands four times — 1984, 1985, 1996 and 1997. She also enjoys anything to do with working out.

Leadership motto: "Treat those the way you would want to be treated, and teamwork. It's not about you. It's about everyone else."



Detroit
Maj. Charles
Dougherty

Background: He was born in New Jersey and at 5, moved to Battle Creek, Mich. — home of Tony the Tiger and Kellogg's Corn Flakes, it's affectionately known as Cereal City.

"Actually my dad worked for Ralston-Purina with Chex (cereal). They had this thing in town called the world's longest breakfast table. They'd have hundreds of picnic tables put together and lined up through Battle Creek, and everyone would sit down and have breakfast. I did that about five or six times."

His other day job: The major is a command and control officer by trade.

"I talk to aviators and tell them what to do from the ground. We're like the Air Force AWACS guy or the E-2 guys, except they do it from the plane, I do it on the ground."

Before coming to Detroit, he spent several months in Iraq and Kuwait. "We were actually targeted a few times from ballistic missiles and scud missiles. Luckily, we had a Patriot unit collocated with us and they shot down every missile fired," he said. "I don't think it was scary. The training we get pays off and reinforces what we do in combat."

Leadership motto: "I guess the biggest thing is train your people to accomplish the mission, give them a lot of responsibility, and let them carry out your commander's intent."



Albuquerque
Maj. Thomas
Maddock

Background: Maddock grew up in Camillus, a suburb of Syracuse, N.Y., where he was a “winter sports person” who excelled in skiing and ice hockey. He made the decision to join the military while at Bowling Green State University.

“A lot of my friends back home were joining the military. It was a good head start for a person to get some money, get a house, and get a lot of responsibility at a young age,” he said.

Favorite assignment:

Aviano Air Base, Italy, from 1994 to 1998. Maddock is a ski enthusiast who took advantage of the Piancavallo ski resort only 20 minutes from the base, as well as skiing throughout Europe.

He was also at Aviano when Capt. Scott O’Grady was shot down in Yugoslavia, thought dead, only to resurface alive and evading the enemy a few days later. He worked at the Military Personnel Flight when O’Grady processed out of the Air Force after his rescue.

Something people don’t know about him: He’s played Division I hockey in college with Rob Blake, who now plays with the Colorado Avalanche. “We’re good friends, and I keep in touch with him. If I’m up in Denver, he gets me passes (to the game). He’s a nice guy.”



Amarillo
Lt. Cmdr. Janie
Powell-Mims

Background: Powell-Mims joined the Navy because she was looking for a challenge.

“I’m from a small hometown — Tchule, Miss. — and there is nothing to do there. There is no challenge.”

She attended Mississippi Valley State University on a full academic scholarship after maintaining a 3.8 average in high school. One day while walking by the student union, a Navy recruiter caught her eye and told her about the Bachelor’s Degree Completion Program where the service pays for the last two years of school in exchange for four years of active-duty service. Since she already had the scholarship, the Navy instead paid her \$1,000 a month for her last two years.

A great story she can tell years from now: While stationed at Misawa Air Base, Japan, from 1998 to 2001, she climbed Mt. Fuji.

If she were on a reality television show, it would be:

“I haven’t the foggiest idea. I don’t watch those.”

Something people don’t know about her: “If nobody knows it, I’m not going to tell them about it.”

Leadership motto:
“Integrity.”



Butte
Maj. Terry
Clark

Background: Clark is a man of the woods, in the truest sense. He was born in Ohio and split his growing up years between there and Colorado, where he learned to hunt, fish and live off the land. It’s not unusual for him to spend as much as 20 days alone in the wilderness.

After joining the Air Force Air National Guard in his senior year of high school, he transferred to active-duty Army in 1990. In 1993 he was commissioned in the Army under the program that allows soldiers to become officers and complete their bachelor’s degree before they make captain.

Favorite assignment: Fort Wainwright, Alaska. “It was a great duty assignment from a lot of different perspectives. Montana is like Alaska’s little brother. There’s a lot to do here, so I’m going to enjoy it. We just did an informal social activity with everyone at the MEPS where we inner-tubed on the Madison River.”

Hobbies: “Hunting and fishing, so I think I’m a good fit with Butte. I’ve done a little hunting for moose, bear, wolf, things of that nature.”

Something people don’t know about him: “I like to do a lot of manly stuff. I do the hunting, the woodworking, I have a lot of power tools, and I do the cross country skiing. But I also do counted cross-stitching. I like the attention to detail and the creativity of it.”



El Paso
Maj. Cecile
Warren

Background: Warren was born in the Philippines and when her Navy dad was reassigned, she moved to the United States at about 6 years old.

“I remember it being very, very hot,” she said of her home country. “My grandparents owned a farm and there were lots of bananas and I loved the tropical fruit. I was finally able to bring my children back there to visit my grandparents and the farm.”

Dad didn’t say much about her joining the military but wanted to know why she didn’t follow in his Navy footsteps. “I told him, ‘Dad, I didn’t want to get seasick.’”

Hobbies: “I like to read, love to do cross stitching, and love to bake — mostly desserts and breads.”

She also has a thing for cows. “Honestly, I don’t know why. My oldest son was about 4 when gave me a cow figurine and I started collecting them. I have cow paraphernalia, stuffed animals, rugs, cow coffee creamers, everything.”

Something people don’t know about her: “Most people, when they see me, think I’m a quiet person. I’m short. I’m barely 5’1”. I’m Asian. So people think I’m quiet. But silent waters run deep. I’m not in the normal mode. I like to joke and make people feel comfortable.”

A wrong done right

Fifty-four years ago, Joe Krieger marched through Hell ... now he's got the Purple Heart to prove it

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor
and
Lt. Brian Baker
Louisville MEPS operations officer

Joe Krieger never talks much about the war.

The bullet wound to his leg has long healed, but he still walks with a limp – not from the bullet, but from frostbite, a never-wanted souvenir from Korea.

For years, he never talked about how he went missing in action. Never talked about how his unit was annihilated, or how his parents were told he was dead. He never talked about what happened to him, and the things he saw.

"I always knew he got hurt over there, but when we brought it up, he'd always change the subject," said his son, Marine Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krieger, who commands the Louisville MEPS.

"I just wanted to get on with my life ... a lot of guys I knew were killed. A lot of things you see, you just want to forget."

– Joe Krieger describing the hellish conditions during the Korean War

"I just wanted to get on with my life," his dad said. "I felt bad. A lot of guys I knew were killed. One guy was shot in the head when he stopped to smoke a cigarette. Another guy gets blown up and his body is hanging in a tree. A lot of things you see, you just want to forget."

So when his enlistment ended, he forgot about the Purple Heart he never got, and went back home to get on with his life.

"I wasn't worried about it," he said. "I just wanted to get discharged."

Years later, he thought again, and asked his son for help. A few letters and phone calls later, Sen. Carl Levin, presented Joe Krieger on Feb. 28 the long overdue Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal and the United Nations Service Medal at a ceremony in Troy, Mich.

"(He) made a difference in the world," said Levin, one of the highest-ranking members of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. "Sometimes people don't realize how important the Korean War was to saving the free world. But for anybody who's been to North Korea, as I've been, you know. You see the devastation of North Korea and the freedom and wonders of South Korea."

"It did feel good to finally get it," Joe Krieger, 75, said. "It was a nice ceremony. It's an honor."

He answers in short, gruff sentences, in a voice made hoarse by age. But after awhile he opens up and, slowly – ever so slowly – talks about the things he never wanted to talk about ...

... Joe Krieger was 17 when he joined the Army in 1946. World War II was over and no one dreamed there would be another war only a few years later.

"War? No, never thought about that," he said. "I just wanted something to do. I stayed in a year and a half and got out. Stayed home for 30 days, then re-enlisted because I didn't have anything else to do, and they were going to send me to Japan with a friend of mine.



Joe Krieger as he looked during the Korean War.

"I was stationed at Sasebo, Yokohama, and Kyoro. It was real nice. The people were real nice. A lot of people were still mad at them (for the war), but not me. Hell, they did the same thing we did. They were sent over to fight, and they did it. It was just like that in Korea, too. Those people didn't want to fight. They wanted to go home to their wives and family, just like us. The difference (in Korea) was there were people behind them with guns. They only had clubs at first, and if they didn't attack us, their own people shot them. When one of our guys would get shot down, they'd pick up his gun."

Korea wasn't even supposed to be a war. Police action is what the U.S. government called it. Krieger's unit – the 34th Infantry Regiment in Japan – was the first called to the fight.

"We were told we'd be there three weeks and it would all be over," he scoffed. "That was the longest three weeks of my life. We were there for 13 months."

With no end in sight, Krieger tried not to think about it. "I just hoped I wouldn't get killed at that point. I did a lot of praying in the foxhole every time a mortar came over. Just prayed it wouldn't come in. I lost a lot of friends."

This wasn't just a police action. All hell was breaking loose in Korea. His unit fought from Pusan to Osan, then withdrew to a defensive position in Chonan. Close range combat turned into bitter, hand-to-hand fighting. The 34th moved to Taejon by the end of July, 1950. The regiment was over-

stressed and under strength. By day they dealt with stifling heat and the onset of malaria. At night, the enemy crept closer and the two sides fought with bayonets and bare hands. On July 31, Krieger and a couple friends, hungry after moving and fighting all day, stopped to eat with some South Koreans.

"And when I looked up the hill, my unit was gone."

They spent 19 days moving, hiding in the woods, fighting on their own, and looking for their unit. They met a few others who were cut off, along with a South Korean soldier.

"At first we didn't trust him, but he was just a regular G.I. just like us," he said.

Krieger met with what was left of the 34th Infantry Regiment at the Naktong River. Several of them had already been killed. Getting separated may have saved Krieger's life. But there was no time to rejoice. The North Koreans – aided by the Chinese – mounted a major offensive to finish the unit off. Krieger got lucky. He only got shot in the leg.

"There were only maybe 20 of us left," Krieger said. "They were all wiped out."

His family back home had already been notified he was missing in action, and was never told he rejoined the unit. Then as he recovered from his bullet wound, they got more bad news.

"They notified my father that I was killed," Krieger said. "They didn't notify me. I was in the hospital."

There was no unit to go back to when he was released from the hospital in January 1951.

"There no longer was a 34th. They said we were going home, and we got our hopes up," Krieger said. "They just sent us home on paper, and moved the rest of us to different units."

Saying the 34th Infantry Regiment was going back home was just a play on words. The United States thought it best to say that instead of reporting the unit was destroyed.

Krieger moved that January to the 19th Infantry Regiment. The stifling summer had given way to a frigid winter, something else for which the Army wasn't prepared. Their boots weren't made for this kind of cold. Krieger said first their feet would sweat, and then they'd freeze.



Joe Krieger today with his Purple Heart (right), Sen. Carl Levin, and his son, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krieger (below) who made it happen.



"We just had regular combat boots. A lot of guys would take off their boots to warm their feet by a fire. Then we'd get attacked, and have to run off without any shoes. Both my legs were frozen. There's a ton of people who lost legs because of it."

Krieger fought in Korea until August 1951. By that time, U.S. troops fought the enemy back into North Korea, got pushed back to the 38th parallel, and the fighting sawsawed back and forth.

For Pfc. Krieger, his fighting was done. After his discharge, he moved from New York to Troy, Mich., married his hometown sweetheart, Audrey, and put the past behind him ...

... and that's where it stayed until a visit with his son in 1997.

"He asked me if I could do some research to see if there were any (military) reunions. He started going to his reunions with people he served. It helped him to open up," Lt. Col. Krieger said.

Then at the end of 2003, he asked his son for help with the Veteran's Administration.

"I think he started to realize he was getting older, and wanted to take care of this. He wanted two things. He wanted the Purple Heart, and he wanted help with his disability.

The military only gave him 10 percent for the frostbite, and he was getting the runaround with the VA.

"He knows how I am. Once I get it in my mind to do something, I do it," Lt. Col. Krieger said. "I've never not done something I said I was going to do."

Besides the medals, his son helped his father get his disability increased to 30 percent.

North and South Korea signed a cease-fire in 1953, but not a peace treaty. Both sides are technically still at war, faced off against

"We just had regular combat boots. A lot of guys would take off their boots to warm their feet by a fire. Then we'd get attacked, and have to run off without any shoes. Both my legs were frozen. There's a ton of people who lost legs because of it."

— Joe Krieger on the vicious winter during the Korean War

one another at the 38th parallel — the same place Joe Krieger found himself in 1951. He's never been back. Never had a desire. For more than 50 years, the only thing he had to remember from Korea was a limp.

Now he has his long, overdue honor of the Purple Heart.

And now the family — and the world — knows the rest of the story of Pfc. Joe Krieger.

Family affair in Iraq

—Richmond mom knows all too well about the sacrifices the military must make

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

The average age of the military man is 19 years. He is a short haired, tight-muscled kid who, under normal circumstances is considered by society as half man, half boy. Not yet dry behind the ears, not old enough to buy a beer, but old enough to die for his country ...

So goes the mass e-mail circulating the Internet about today's soldier serving in Iraq. Gloria Williams from the Richmond MEPS knows the e-mail well. She has seen it. She has forwarded it to others. She has lived it. Her son, Steven, 19, is currently serving in the hot spot of Fallujah, Iraq. Another son, 22-year-old Jabari, recently returned from Iraq and is stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif. When Williams helps process young men and women into the military every day, she doesn't just see nameless faces. She sees the faces of her own children.

"I'm so proud of all of them," she said. "They're serving their country, and they're serving proudly. I always keep them in prayer, and when (applicants who are processing) have questions about the military, I tell them about my kids. All I can do is tell them my experiences. I see that sometimes they're unsure or scared. But I can help put their minds at rest."

Williams knows all about military sacrifice. Her husband, John, who passed away in 1992, served in Desert Storm. Her oldest daughter, Latisha, joined the Army Reserve in 1990 and served eight years. It was her middle child, Jabari, who influenced his two other brothers to join the Marines.

"My middle son talked to every recruiter because he wasn't sure. He felt the Marine Corps recruiter was the only one who really talked to him and didn't care if he joined or not. He sat down, explained the program, and left it up to my son."

Jabari joined in 2000, and the family came to Parris Island, S.C., for his graduation. That's when her oldest son, Timothy, 24, decided on a life change.

"He had gone to college for two years, but when we went to the graduation, we were just in awe of the Marine Corps. He said, 'Mom, I really didn't want to go to school. I did that for you. I want to join the Marine Corps.'"

Timothy is currently serving stateside in the Reserve. Jabari deployed to Iraq in February 2003 and stayed until August of that year.

"I know she was worried but she didn't show it," Jabari said of his six-month deployment. "She's a strong woman."

His mom said that's because she had seen it before.

"Because my husband was in Desert Storm, I knew it was coming, and I knew how I was going to feel," Williams said. "Jabari is married, so I let his wife know what to expect, and helped her out."

Meanwhile, there was never a question

that her youngest, Steven, would also join the few and proud.

"That was always his main goal," Williams said. "He did junior ROTC for his four years of high school, went to all the summer camps, and he always wanted to be in the infantry."

And she knew when he did join the Marines that combat wouldn't be far away. He left March 2 for Fallujah.

Like any mom, she worries about her boys, and she does a lot of praying for Steven's safe return. She also beams with pride at the mention of their names.

"You know, others who don't have children over there, or don't know anyone in the military, can't understand what these young people have given up in order to serve. They have had to give up some of their freedoms for our own freedoms."



Gloria Williams and her sons and daughter.



Family affair

Continued from page 26

"I knew (Steven) would see war," she added. "Because he's the baby, it's a little harder, but he told me this is what he wanted to do. He kept making me feel at ease. Their dad would be happy. He'd be very proud of them, too."

So Gloria Williams goes to the MEPS each day. She prays and waits for Steven's safe return. She processes new applicants into the military. And she doesn't just see the faces of her own children. She sees the faces of America.



At home, Gloria Williams keeps a shrine to her military family. Her husband John (bottom left) served in Desert Storm and has since passed away.

Command sends care packages



This summer, while working in his civilian position at USMEPCOM Headquarters Facilities Directorate, Greg Sielepkowski spearheaded an effort to obtain supplies to be sent to military members in Iraq.

As an Air Force Reserve master sergeant, Sielepkowski first deployed to northern Iraq in the Spring of 2003 and knows firsthand what military members there truly need.

He requested the following items for the drive: baby wipes in resealable pocket packs (no hard plastic boxes), tan or desert camouflage hankies/bandanas, dried fruit in resealable packs, nuts in plastic packs (no glass jars), wrap-around sun glasses (dark, but inexpensive ones), dried beef packs in resealable packs, no-pest strips, zipper-type plastic bags in quart, gallon and two-gallon sizes, and cards of encouragement.

Sielepkowski sent the boxes in August.

Jacob Lonowski will be smashing helmets on the Georgia Tech grid iron, and the Omaha ESS is ... One proud mom

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Let's get one thing out of the way — Jacob Lonowski is one big dude. At 6'5" and 290 pounds, he towers over his mother and most others around him. And this fall, in between classes in physics, he'll put that size to good use as a tackle for the Georgia Tech football team.



Jacob Lonowski towers over his mom, Terri Lonowski, the Education Services Specialist at the Omaha MEPS.

Lonowski, the son of Terri Lonowski, the education services specialist at the Omaha MEPS, will attend Georgia Tech on a full, four-year scholarship. And as you can imagine, mom is, well, one proud mom.

"I am so pleased for him," she gushed. "It's such a good fit."

Terri said she realized at a young age her boy was destined to do great things in athlet-

ics. She sent him to football camps in the summer, and encouraged him during the school year. Besides football, he lettered in wrestling and track and field at Elkhorn High School, and placed 6th in Nebraska in the high school shot put. He also put up good numbers in the classroom, with a 3.5 grade point average.

"He told me he wanted to go to a college that had a good football program and a prestigious math and science program. I asked around, and the name Georgia Tech kept coming up."

So at the end of his sophomore year, Terri took her son to check out the campus and meet some coaches. They saw what they liked, and by the end of the next year, offered him the full scholarship.

As one can expect, it takes a lot of food to grow them big like Jacob, and that doesn't bother his mom a bit.

"We have a really good combination," she said. "I enjoy cooking, and he enjoys eating."

No word on whether she'll be carting those home-cooked meals to Georgia, but she does plan on cheering Jacob on from the stands during a couple games. And right now, it doesn't matter if he goes onto a multimillion contract with the National Football League, becomes a world-class physicist or follows his passion in another direction.

"As a parent, I'm just so happy that he's taking such a positive step forward in his life," Terri said. "My hope is he follows his heart, and wherever that takes him, I'll be happy."



Jacob Lonowski signs on with Georgia Tech.



Second time around

This isn't the first time Jacob Lonowski's photo appears in the *Messenger*. In 1993, this *Messenger* photo shows Jacob trying on a survival life vest, something he had the opportunity to do when a then-MEPS sailor spoke about his worldwide adventures during a visit to Jacob's first-grade class.

Those who can, teach

Kentucky duo change a system and make some champs in the process

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Staff Sgt. Jose Hernandez got his first soccer ball when he was 4. Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krieger didn't.

Hernandez kicked that ball around his neighborhood, and played high school varsity soccer.

Krieger didn't.

Hernandez played semipro soccer for Mexico, turned down a full soccer scholarship to join the military, and played for the all-Marine team.

Krieger didn't.

"I was more of a football guy," said Krieger, commander of the Louisville MEPS. "I only got involved because my son was a soccer player."

Hernandez is the soccer star.

Krieger, by his own admission, is just an old Marine.

One teaches the skills. The other teaches the leadership. Maybe by now it's intertwined. Whoever does what, together they do it well. The two Marines have coached a recreational team with an impressive record of 24 wins and 8 losses, and an even better job coaching an all-star, traveling team to an overall 52-0 record. In the process, they revitalized a waning soccer league and made it one of the tops in that region.

It's all something Krieger never envisioned when he first signed up his son for that Floyd County Youth Soccer Association back in 2000, nor something Hernandez pictured when he first arrived for duty at the MEPS a year later.

"I started as an assistant coach and only did that because I wanted to be with my son," Krieger said. "When the head coach quit, the team was going to fold. I went to my neighbor and we stepped to the plate. I told him, 'I'm football. I don't know the first thing about soccer.' I figured he could handle the technical skills and I could lead and manage."

But the night before the first game, Krieger got a call from the other coach.

"Good luck on the game tomorrow," the head coach said.

"What?!?" Krieger replied.

"I thought I told you," the coach said. "I work Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. I can't go to any of the games. Just the practices."

"And that," Krieger said, "is how I became a coach. I got the line up from him and did my best."

Krieger lost the first game. He didn't lose another one in the recreation league for another four years.

Meanwhile, he and some of the other parents didn't like the way the league was run.

"There was no focus on the kids, no focus on the customer service," Krieger said. "There were a lot of things that were broke in the league, and a lot of people running the league who weren't ready to hear that. But I don't do reach-arounds. I'm a Marine. If it's broke, I'm gonna look you in the eye and tell you how to fix it."

When the league board members didn't want to hear his opinion, Krieger did the next best thing. He became the guy in the league who makes the rules.

"There were some people who didn't like my style and didn't want me to coach. I ran for the registrar's position and found a little rule that said not only can the board vote, but so can anybody with a child playing soccer. Every parent on our team showed up to vote, and I got the job."

It wasn't anything like a Chesty Puller epic, but as far as soccer stories go, not a bad one at that. The wins and trophies stacked up. Hernandez reported for duty at Louisville in January 2001, and saw the trophies in Krieger's office.

"He asked where I got them, and that got us talking about soccer," Krieger said. "For a Marine, he's very humble. He gave up a full-ride scholarship to play at Ohio State so he could join the Marines. He's very active in the Hispanic community. He'll never tell you any of that stuff. When I found out his

background, I got him to help out with the soccer league."

Together the two coached a Youth-14 team that won more games than most experienced travel teams. When that recreational league went on to beat one of the all-star teams, parents insisted Krieger and Hernandez put together their own traveling all stars.

"The fun part is we're doing it for the kids, and it's fun to see them learn," Hernandez said.

It's one of the few things Hernandez actually does say. The guy really is humble.

"I don't want to take any credit," he said. "Colonel Krieger already had the league. I just help out."

He actually serves as the assistant registrar and Krieger's right hand man.

"When we take the uniform off and go on the soccer field, I can separate work and play," Krieger said. "And what he does is invaluable."

There are as many as 800 teens in the league and Hernandez spends about 20 minutes on each child to update data in the computer. Then he generates 70 team rosters based on the skills and experience of each player, and better matches teams up for schedules and tournaments.

But this year, things are going to be different. Krieger and Hernandez will still coach the all-stars. But for the first time, they'll coach separate recreational teams.

"It's unspoken, but there will be a friendly rivalry," Krieger said. "But it's all in fun. As long as the kids have fun."

But for those interested in just how a soccer player and an old Marine actually did get those teams to win, Krieger said there's one formula that works, and they'll use it again this year.

"Whether it's the recreation league or the travel league, we teach the kids to have heart. They win more games because of heart instead of soccer skills. Heart and intensity win out over soccer skills every time."

Three soldiers set out just to beat the bridge ... and then do it



By 1st Lt. Dominic Mirabella
Jacksonville MEPS

The last mile part is the worst — a half-mile uphill on a 6 percent grade, and that's after already running more than 9 miles just to get to it. Being a soldier may

keep you in shape, but it doesn't prepare you for the Gate River Run's Hart Bridge, which peaks at 141 feet over the St. John's River before coming back down toward Alltel Stadium.

And so three soldiers from the Jacksonville MEPS laced up their shoes, started training and set out to conquer the big, bad hill.

So began the preparation a month earlier for Army Sgts. Margo James, Laura Hendricks, and Anja Parker of the Jacksonville MEPS, who joined 8,000 others from as far away as California for the Gate River Run. The nationally-known event even attracted nine Olympians. The soldiers competed in the World-renowned 15 kilometer race on the morning of March 13th.

The soldiers didn't set out to win — just to finish, just to beat Hart Bridge.

They began training with 5- and 6-mile runs throughout the neighborhoods around the MEPS. They also received training from a local sporting goods store and the YMCA to learn about effective techniques for breathing, and how to use sprint training and other cardiovascular training to get prepared for the event. Then they took time to go out on their own to run on several inclined bridges in the metropolitan area

to prepare them for the Hart Bridge section of the race.

"My goal was to finish the run in an hour and 40 minutes. I ran it in an hour and 37 minutes, so I am really happy," James said of her accomplishment. "This is something I've always wanted to do since I first came to Jacksonville three years ago. I would love to do this again and hopefully get my time down to an hour with some training."

Parker said she set one main goal before the race.

"I wanted to run this race since seeing it on television last year," said Parker. "I wanted to finish without walking and I was happy to end up accomplishing my goal with a 10-minute pace," she stated.

"I was happy to end up running the entire course with a 10-minute pace," Hendricks added, "but I think I can run it at an 8-minute pace when I race again next year!"

All three soldiers agreed that Hart Bridge was their most difficult challenge. James and Hendricks said it was especially hard after suffering ankle injuries earlier in the race.

"I fell less than a half mile into the race and sprained my ankle, so by the time I got to the Bridge, it was a real challenge," Hendricks said.

Now these three hunger for more glory in distance running. Parker is training for the Marine Corps half marathon in October, and Hendricks is focusing on a marathon within the next two or three years. James plans on running the next full marathon in Orlando.



Sgts. Laura Hendricks and Anja Parker are all smiles during the Gate River Run in Jacksonville, Fla. It's not the 9 miles that makes this race a doozy — it's the half-mile, uphill run right before the finish line.

Memphis hoopsters double wins and getting better

By Lt. Lee Levells and
Tech. Sgt. Daniel Boyer
Memphis MEPS

Last year it was only two. This year it was four. Next year? All the way, baby, said Marine Staff Sgt. Michah Wilson from the Memphis MEPS, and one of the players on the only joint service basketball team in the Naval Support Activity's Mid-South intramural league.

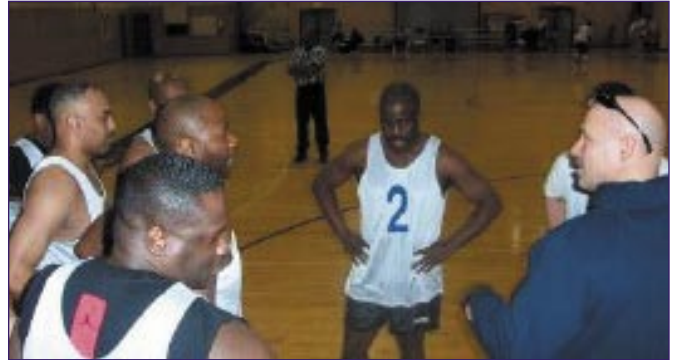
They recently finished the season at 4-4, winning twice as many games as last year, and won the first round of the playoffs before getting eliminated.

"Hey, we did pretty good," he said. "A couple of those games we lost by only a couple points. We had most of last year's players return and a few new faces but there was a lot of chemistry on the team. We played well together."

"We did better than last year," added teammate Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Toby Evans. "Anything is better than the year before."

The team that works together during the day — MEPS employees, service liaisons, recruiters, civilians and military — made up the brunt of the team that also included Air Force Staff Sgt. Reggie Scott, Army Sgts. 1st Class Kenneth Carter, Dennis Money, and Carlos Reynolds; Navy Chief Petty Officer Alonzo Thompson, Petty Officer 2nd Class Curtis Blair; Petty Officer 3rd Class William Tatman and Arkelious Benton.

"The hardest part was we didn't have a lot of players, and we were playing some teams that could rotate people," Wilson said. "That's one of our weak spots. We hope to get some more players next year so we can build on this."



The Memphis MEPS basketball team members confer during a game.

Of course with a joint team comes a little joint smack talk, but Wilson said it was all in good fun.

"We all had our little spiel. Who was the better players on the team? Army, Marines, Navy or Air Force? Who was lazy and who was scoring all the points? But it was in good fun. It shows we do work well together and it built a lot of camaraderie."

Knoxville crew knocks out racism a step at a time

By Sgt. Mike Smith
Knoxville MEPS

It was only a step at a time, one foot in front of the other, for 12 Knoxville MEPS employees and their family members, but the goal wasn't necessarily a finish line, even though there was one, in the Knoxville Race Against Racism.

The MEPS crew laced up tennis shoes to walk and run alongside nearly 200 others in the annual 5K run and one-mile walk sponsored by the Young Women's Christian Association, helping to raise about \$3,000 in the process for the organization.

The Knoxville YWCA runs day care and outreach programs, as well as a 58-room residence program for women getting back on their feet.

"Our programs help the community as a whole, so the proceeds from the race are distributed to our programs, which help everyone, regardless of who they are," said Cathy Bond, the YWCA special events coordinator.

The main theme of the event was to eradicate racism and work together with one another for a brighter future.

"Diversification is nothing new to those of us in the military, but it's always good to reinforce that message," said 1st Sgt. Ross Corbett, who completed the walk with his wife, Juanita, and his children: Andrew, Sarah and Austin.

This year's event took place in the scenic and hill strewn neighborhood of Mechanicsville Commons. There were a lot of inclines on the two-lap loop, serving a double dose of hill work.

This is the third year in a row the MEPS has participated in the program, and with 12 in their group, they took up the "largest group" award.

Besides Corbett, others in the MEPS group included Lt. Cmdr. Carol Kushmierz, Knoxville MEPS commander, her husband, Dave, and daughter, Samantha; Staff Sgt. Evelyn Cooper; Sgt. Michael Smith; Cheryl Thompson; and Betty Scheider.



Three of Knoxville's group who participated in the Race Against Racism are (left to right) Cheryl Thompson, budget technician, Betty Scheider, human resources assistant, and Staff Sgt. Evelyn Cooper, test administrator.

Too much free time?

—No ... they just know their trivia!

New Orleans test coordinator takes on Jeopardy

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

David Johnston didn't want to look stupid. No worries there, David. The ASVAB test coordinator from the New Orleans MEPS — and certified Jeopardy champion — won \$25,400 from his two-day day stint on the game show he grew up watching.

"I've been a fan (of Jeopardy) since I was a kid," he said. "This was a dream come true."

Johnston doesn't have any highfalutin college degrees, nor is he an esteemed man of letters. But the former X-ray technician has a head for trivia and grew up watching the game.

"They have a lot of people with doctorates on the show, but you just have to be a well-rounded person with a head for trivia, know a lot of little things. I actually tried out three years ago, but didn't make it past the first round," Johnston said.

When he heard they were holding auditions last August at a New Orleans hotel, he gave it one more shot.

"There were about 45 of us, and they picked four," he said.

To get where he got, he first had to get past the first round — a 50-question test dolled out by Alex Trebek via videotape. They aren't multiple choice and producers don't tell potential contestants how many they have to get right. Afterward, the 45 sweat the results while tests were collected and graded in 15 minutes.

"I was really hoping," Johnston said. "I didn't think the questions were that hard, but I thought they were easy the first time."

"They came out and one of the first names they said was 'David Jackson.' I almost jumped out of my seat. Then they did say my name. I jumped up and yelled."

But that was no guarantee he'd get any further. The next step involved a mock Jeopardy game, complete with fake buzzers, so producers could videotape the winners and see how they looked on television.

Johnston and the others were told if they were picked, they'd get a phone call anytime within the next eight months. He got his call two months later in October.

The next step was getting there. Contestants pay their own way to Los Angeles, and their own hotel, with a special rate of \$99 a night at the Beverly Hills Radisson.

"I was a little surprised by that," he said. "I thought they'd pay for everything."

Since producers shoot a week's worth of shows in one day, he and 14 others had to wait in a large room to pass the time and wait their turn. Then came the moment. No more mock questions. No fake buzzers. And Trebek in person instead of videotape.

"My knees were literally shaking," Johnston said. "It's pretty intimidating. I read through a lot of reference books. When I saw the categories, I was a little disappointed. They had stuff like construction, birds and islands. I'm more a history, literature and movie buff."

He started slow — not even buzzing on the first six questions. Then after racking up a few bucks, he got the daily double on a question about queens of England. He risked it all — \$2,200.

"I was way behind, but that put me in second place. I got more control, and got on a roll."

By the time of Final Jeopardy, he had the lead sewn up, and the other two couldn't even catch him.

He thought about pulling a Cliff Claven, then thought again.

"I wanted to walk away with at least \$20,000, so I didn't bet too much."

Johnston had a few minutes to change clothes — to make it look like the next day — then was back for more. He took second place the next day, and got the consolation prize of \$2,000. Third place winners get \$1,000.

The hard part was keeping his mouth shut after he got home. If word leaked to the press before his show aired, the producers could yank it and refuse to pay. Finally, his show aired in February.

"Now I'm just waiting for the check," he said. "It should be here any day now."

St. Louis operations officer spins the wheel

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Air Force Capt. Mark Cantrell credits his time as the St. Louis MEPS operations officer for familiarizing himself with American cities, and that helped make him \$12,950 richer on the Wheel of Fortune.

He didn't win the top money on the show, but still took home a tidy sum for solving the final puzzle of the day – "Shreveport, Louisiana" – in the "On-the-Map" category. Cantrell only had \$950 going into the final round, but when host Pat Sajak gave the wheel a final spin, it landed on \$5,000 a letter, and the game show automatically adds another \$1,000 for each letter of the last puzzle.

"Everything goes so fast when you're on the show, it's hard to concentrate and know how much money you have and pick letters for the puzzle. It's harder than when you're watching it on the television. I thought I won about \$6,000, so when Pat told me how much I had actually won, it was a pleasant surprise."

It helped cover his trip to Hollywood and then some. Wheel of Fortune contestants must pay their way to California and for the hotel. Since Cantrell brought his wife, Kelly, also an Air Force captain stationed at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.; his children, Rachel, 6; and Daniel, 5; and his father, Wilford, he figured he needed to win \$3,000 to at least break even.

Cantrell's Wheel of Fortune adventure began when the game show held a contestant search in St. Louis. Officials allow 800 people to sign up at each contestant call, "And we were literally running to get our names in the box," Cantrell said. "We were the last people to put our names in."

Officials then pour the 800 cards in a hopper, mix it up, and draw out 30 names to come on stage. Amazingly, out of 800, he and his wife were picked.

"That's pretty rare that we both got called," he said. "You basically go up there, play a speed round in front of people and if (the officials) like what they see – your enthusiasm, your game play, your voice – they invite you back for a second round of auditions."

The Cantrells were both called back for more auditions in St. Louis so officials could whittle the field further. Kelly didn't make



Pat Sajak congratulates Capt. Mark Cantrell for solving another puzzle.

it, but Mark made it to the next and final stage.

"They told the last group of us that if we made it, we'd hear from them in three months. I was starting to think they forgot about, when I got the letter in the mail." The Cantrells flew to Hollywood to tape the show Nov. 11, and it aired Dec. 12. Sajak When it came time for introductions, Cantrell plugged his MEPS.

"Everything goes so fast when you're on the show, it's hard to concentrate and know how much money you have and pick letters for the puzzle"

"It says here that you're an operations officer. Tell us more about that," Sajak said.

"Yes, Pat, I'm the operations officer at the St. Louis Military Entrance Processing Station where I work with a great team of folks and over the last few years we've brought in approximately 15,000 new recruits into all branches of the military."

His Wheel of Fortune appearance also capped a 20-year Air Force career. Soon after returning, Cantrell put in his retirement papers, and officially became a civilian July 1. His wife will join him in retirement next year. He spent some of his prize money on Lasik eye surgery and the rest toward a dream house he and Kelly are building in the St. Louis area.

Dossier



David B. Wyatt
*Operations
Indianapolis MEPS*

Hometown: Burbank, Ill.

Years in service: 20 years active duty in the Army and six years in civil service. Wyatt is currently a GS-9.

Hobbies: "My wife, my kids, and reading sci-fi."

Most important achievement thus far in life: "I helped a fellow human being find peace in their heart."

Three things that can always be found in his refrigerator: "Soda, cheese, and milk."

Last book he read: Elvenbane by André Norton and Mercedes Lackey

Favorite movie and why: "Godspell." It tells the story of Jesus Christ with love and respect, not fear or punishment."

Motto he lives by: "Always make the corner of your world a little better than you found it."

One food he can't live without: "Soda."

If you were stranded on a desert island with just a boom box and a lot of batteries, what three CD's would he like to have?: "The movie sound track from Godspell; Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon; and Peter, Paul and Mary's Best of 10 years together."

His favorite song by Elvis Presley?: "Elvis who?"

If he could have lunch with any person in history, who would it be and what would you ask?: "Jesus Christ, just to say thanks."

The two greatest people he has met in his life?: "My wife for loving me all of these years, warts and all; and my kids for deciding to accept me as their father, even though I am just their stepfather."

If he had three hours to himself, what would he do?: "Read a book."

If he were an entertainer, what would he be?: "A stand-up comic."

If he were a car, what would he be?: "An old VW bug."

Favorite Twilight Zone episode?: "Never watched it."

Usual order at McDonalds?: "The No. 2 meal — two cheese burgers, fries and a Diet Coke."

Taxes — early or late?: "Early."

A little bit of country, or a little bit of rock 'n' roll?: "More rock 'n' roll and blue grass."



Jim Burnell, the Portland, Maine MEPS education services specialist (left) and Maj. Timothy Merriott (right) pose with teachers from Noble High School after presenting them with awards for their dedication to the ASVAB career program.

A noble effort in Portland

The Portland, Maine, MEPS ended the 2004 school year by recognizing one of their best high school contacts for giving the ASVAB test to 100 percent of the juniors.

Noble High School teachers and guidance counselors were awarded for making the ASVAB part of the school's curriculum, which is a win-win situation for the military and the school district, said Jim Burnell, the education services specialist.

Although the ASVAB is the primary method for recruiters to find those who may be interested in joining the military, the test is part of a larger career exploration program that gives students an idea of their strengths and weaknesses, and jobs available in the military, government and private sector.

"The difference is the classroom teachers have incorporated (the ASVAB) as part of the curriculum, instead of the counselors and administrators offering it. When classroom teachers take ownership, it's not easy for it to go away. Since it's infused into the system, we give the test earlier in the year, and teachers build their program around the results, and can teach to students based on their strengths, weaknesses, and interests."

The northeast area of the United States is typically less inclined to be receptive to the ASVAB. Burnell said the idea was to explain the benefits to the school, and work with them to develop the program.

"They asked us to move it up to earlier in the year, and they use it as a springboard for other activities such as meaningful career days and career shadowing," Burnell said.

Tim Lounsbury, the school's guidance counselor, was recognized for his role as the primary point of contact and primary liaison for coordinating all the ASVAB services at his school. The award noted Noble High School as an "ASVAB Career Prep Model School."

A second presentation was made to the junior and senior academic classroom teachers at Noble High School. Twelve teachers were recognized for their support and continued incorporation of the ASVAB Career Exploration Program into their academic curriculum.

Officials said the high school will be used as a marketing example of how a well-run ASVAB program should work, and those teachers are willing to explain the benefits to other schools in the area.

Collective effort helps vets reach out and touch a loved one over the phone

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Lot of troops returning from Afghanistan and Iraq have a much easier time reaching out and touching a loved one once they're on American soil. They can thank Connie Hamilton and others from the Denver MEPS who turned in old cell phones that were recycled, with profits going to free phone cards for Johnny and all other service members when they come marching home again.

Hamilton, the test coordinator, first heard about the nationwide campaign started by Veteran's Advantage when the Denver police put out the call for old cell phones. Veteran's Advantage first started the R&R program – Recycle and Reward — in New York on Sept. 11, 2003, two years after the terrorist attacks on that city. Soon, police and fire departments around the country got involved.

Police Lt. Kenny Chavez started the drive in Denver. This wasn't just another charity. Chavez is also a major in the Army National Guard's special forces, and he spent eight months in Afghanistan in 2002.

"It was great to get involved, because I know how something like that is appreciated," said the 24-year Army veteran. "I was over there, and I might be going back, and it's nice to know that people care."

Hamilton knew she had a couple phones collecting dust in a junk drawer at home, and figured others did as well. A few announcements later, she collected 15 phones from the MEPS.

"I just walked up and down the hall, and maybe put it over the loudspeaker once or twice. People were happy to help out."

Now Veteran's Advantage is hoping others will rifle through their junk drawers at home and keep the program going. The goal is to collect a million phones by Veteran's Day.

"There are an estimated 200 million used cell phones in America hiding in desk drawers or taking up space on closet shelves," according to the Veteran's Advantage Web site. "While of no real monetary value, their owners should not toss them out. Old cell phones represent an environmental hazard if discarded into the waste stream, so the R&R program not only helps support our troops, it is good for the planet as well."

Hamilton said next she'd like to start a drive to collect old eyeglasses for needy people in the Denver area, and she plans on asking around for donations. She figures she has a few of those tucked away at home, too.

In the meantime, anyone wanting to participate in the R&R cell phone drive can get more information at www.veteransadvantage.com. (Navy Lt. Jessica Allmond from the Denver MEPS contributed to this story)

Judge and Jury: Indianapolis MEPS troops see military of the future today during five-state competition

By Petty Officer 1st Class Amy Ancil
Indianapolis MEPS

Three military members from the Indianapolis MEPS spent an exhausting weekend in February judging hundreds of Junior ROTC troops from five states, but it sounds like the judges learned more than the judged.

"It was amazing!" said Sgt. Daniel Yates, one of the three participants that also included Chief Petty Jennifer Fields and Sgt. Zachery Halgren. "Most of these kids are going to go into the military, and they give you a lot of faith about our future. They were very respectful and looked sharp. Some of them would even give a challenge to our active-duty units."

Yates mouth dropped when one team lined up eight in a row and drill members on

each side threw rifles in unison in a perfect arc, with the other drill member catching the rifle from the opposite side.

"Believe me, it was amazing," he said.

More than 350 Junior ROTC members, representing 20 high schools from Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Wisconsin and Ohio participated in the Feb. 9 event at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. Yates said he was quick to volunteer to show the military's colors outside the MEPS.

"There's not a very big military presence in that area, so we were treated like kings," he said. "The kids really looked up to us and asked a lot of questions. You could tell they cared about what they were doing, and we were glad to tell them about the military."

Fields, whose own daughter, Alisha Jefferson, spent three years in Junior ROTC before joining the Navy, said the program

helps prepare the students for their future.

"Besides giving them a feel for the rank and chain of command, it does give them more discipline," she said. "Since I'm in the Navy and the participants were Army (Junior ROTC) they had a lot of questions about my uniform. It's fun when you can do something constructive like this."

The three judges got a tour of the university and were well fed and well taken care of during the weekend, Halgren said. Each judge also received a souvenir mug, unit coin and certificate of appreciation. But it didn't come easy. Judging stretched from 7:30 a.m. to 10:45 p.m.

"It was a long day," said Halgren. "We were exhausted. The special treatment we received wasn't the reason I volunteered, but it did make it well worth it."

Miami's Gaitor says the years — 31 of them — just started rushing past

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

It's been 11,375 days, dozens of commanders, hundreds of coworkers, thousands of young recruits and millions of student ASVAB test scores that crossed paths with Debbie Gaitor since she first came to work in and around the Miami MEPS on June 21, 1973.

Sure it might seem like a long time — 11,375 of anything is a lot of something, no matter what you're counting — but after 6,000 or 7,000 days, it really starts to speed by.

"It just started going fast," Gaitor laughed. "I don't know where the time went."

It started out as something to do and somewhere along the way, turned into a career. Gaitor was in a secretarial class in high school when the teacher took a group of students downtown to take a civil service exam.

"We were just high school kids. We didn't want to take an exam! Our teacher said, 'It's for your future.'"

A few weeks later, the Army asked her to interview for a clerical job with the recruiting service.

"I was afraid to go because it was the Army," she said. "I didn't know it was an office job."

She got the job working in the Army liaison office, leaving for a few

years in the late 1970s to work at the battalion level before returning back to the enlistment station to work in operations. In 1986, she took over as the test coordinator. And as coordinating goes, this coordinator has coordinated more than 2,800 sessions since that time.

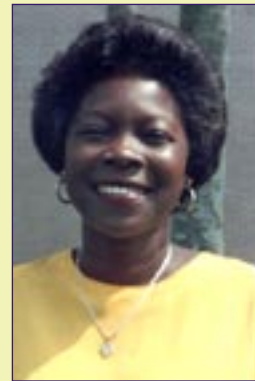
Some things have changed a lot in that time.

She remembers when all enlistee documents were hand typed with carbon copies. She remembers when System 80 was supposed to change the world, before it was replaced with MEPCOM Integrated Resource System that was designed to change the world. She remembers the old processing building where employees had to park in front of meters and would have to run outside every few hours to beat the meter maid. There have been wars, peace keeping and a lot of different presidents.

And some things never really changed at all.

"The people coming in the military still have this scared look on their face, like they don't know what they got themselves into," she said. "The recruiters may have told them this, that and the other thing, but they still don't comprehend it. For a lot of them, this is their first time away from home and they look a little homesick."

Sometimes those recruits end up



Debbie Gaitor is all smiles after 31 years on the job.

back at the MEPS for duty.

"A couple times someone will come up to me and say, 'Remember me?' But it's easier for them to remember me, than me to remember them."

Gaitor figures she has about six years until retirement. When that happens, she'd like to pursue her passion for sewing by opening her own embroidery business. She's been sewing regularly in a local club, for scouts, and cancer and wheelchair patients. More than a few friends graduating high school, or friends leaving the MEPS have received one of *Quillow* creations.

She also looks forward to spending time with her daughter Shawntrice, her son-in-law, Kip, and her four granddaughters: Shawntrice, Rayshari, Ricki and Keondora.



Thanks for everything

Then-Milwaukee MEPS commander Maj. Ross Gagliano presents medical technician Floyd Carter with an award and hearty handshake at his retirement ceremony. After serving 38 years as a medical technician at the MEPS, Carter recently hung up his white coat and plans to move to Florida.

WORDS OF WISDOM:

—2003 Senior NCO of the Year offers tips on success

By Master Sgt. Timothy Morse
Portland, Maine MEPS

(Editor's Note: Morse was USMEPCOM's 2003 Senior NCO of the Year. He was the testing NCOIC at the Portland, Maine MEPS and recently moved to Hanscomb Air Force Base, Mass.)

Winning a command-level award such as Senior NCO of the Year is a humbling and inspiring experience, but it's one you or anyone amongst us can achieve because success just requires dedication to a few principles. These are some of mine. They have served me well, and I hope they do the same for you. Take from them what you will.

Think about those we impact

In my senior year of high school I took a long bus ride from Vermont to the now-closed MEPS in Manchester, N.H. The day left such an impression on me, I used it for the topic of one of my English papers. We all remember something from our visit to the MEPS and how we felt — the awe, fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and combination of other feelings and emotions.

At the Portland, Maine MEPS we get comments like "I've never seen a taxi before, never mind flown on an airplane." We only have a population of 66,000, and some see it as trip to the big city! Remember these people. Always be aware of the impact the MEPS visit is having on them and think of what you want them to take back to their English class, family, friends and community. Many of the individuals do have choices and aren't doing this only for an enlistment bonus or free schooling.

Success is spelled P-A-S-S-I-O-N

The No. 1 thing I've found necessary for success is passion. You need to

become an expert in your job and care deeply about what you do and the people you work with and serve. A former first sergeant used to almost tear up as he handed out an award or spoke about troop welfare. Some would see that as a weakness, but I felt fortunate to recognize it was due to his concern for all of us. He had a deep passion and convictions that helped him succeed and eventually become a sergeant major.

Attitude has a huge impact

Have you ever been to a fast food restaurant where the person behind the counter was unprofessional and made your experience awful? I'm sure you've been to the same chain and had a great person behind the counter who took a thankless position and made your day better by being professional and friendly. Much the same can happen at a MEPS assignment based on the effort the individual puts in to being a team player rather than someone just biding his time. A motivated E-5 can have a huge impact. See if there are any classes you can teach on a training day. Think of unique ways to use AVMF funds to bring the sections together. The ways you can enrich your MEPS are limited only by your creativity (and occasionally a budget). You can be known as a leader no matter how many stripes you wear. And it all starts with your attitude.

Do it and toot it

At a recent training class our first sergeant said don't be afraid to "toot your horn." What she meant was be aware of your service unique requirements for promotion and seek opportunities to show what you've done. You should be there to help your supervisor by doing things like providing a list of things you've done during a rating period, pointing out service unique awards you may be eligible for, etc. This shows



Master Sgt. Timothy Morse

you are actively involved in your career and do have a stake in your future. A wise first sergeant once told me to always think two stripes ahead and plan accordingly.

Embrace the change

I'm now moving on, but MEPCOM has been a great place to be. My first MEPS assignment was back in the days where we had to drive 25 minutes to the contract hotel each night to give the ASVAB; when the secretary was the only person with e-mail; and when the MIRS predecessor took 45 minutes to pull a social security number, and it went down all the time. That was just from 1994 to 1998 when I was at Springfield MEPS.

Things sure have changed. Change is good. Don't be afraid of it. Work to embrace the changes. MEPCOM is truly moving forward. With some dedication to success, you'll keep moving forward, too.

Albany MEPS**Angela Purnell**

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 3
 Last assignment: St. Louis, Mo.
 Diversions: Reading, bowling and walking
 Civilian education: 2 years of college
 First impressions: Friendly

Boston MEPS**Sandra McGirt**

Health Technician
 First Impression: "A family-type atmosphere"

Bill Biter

Health Technician
 First Impression: "Great place to work"

Buffalo MEPS**Cpl. John Kostadinov**

Processing Clerk
 Years of service: 2
 Last assignment: 3d Marine Division, Okinawa Japan
 Military education: Marine Combat Training, Personnel and Administration School
 Diversions: Fitness, spending time with friends and family
 First impression: "Very laid back unit, personnel are friendly and courteous"

Denver MEPS**Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Young**

Medical NCOIC
 Last assignment: Fort Bragg, N.C.
 First impression: "I like it. MEPS is a different environment, but it is friendly and organized"

Sgt. 1st Class Joyce Taylor

Operations NCOIC
 Last assignment: Fort Jackson, S.C.
 First impression: "One Team, One Fight!"

Honolulu MEPS**Petty Officer 2nd Class Mario Pulsinelli**

Test Administrator
 Years of service: 5
 Last assignment: USS Milius

Sgt. Victoria Suber

Military Personnel Clerk
 Years of service: 8
 Last assignment: Fort Jackson, S.C.

Lansing MEPS**1st Sgt. Rebecca Jackson**

Civilian education: Associate of Arts
 First Impression: Great organization and great folks working here
 Diversions: Family and church

**Los Angeles MEPS****1st Lt. Lawrence Bernard**

Assistant Operations Officer
 Years of service: 3
 Civilian education: Bachelor of Science in International Relations
 Military education: Officer Basic Course and the Aviation Flight School
 Last assignment: Fort Huachuca, Ariz.
 Diversions: Volleyball
 First impression: "I love it!"

Sgt. Kendrick Gaines

Operations NCO
 Years of service: 3
 Last assignment: Fort Riley, Kan.
 Diversions: Basketball, football, clubbing and studying
 First impression: "I saw a lot of hard-working NCOs getting the job done to beef up our Armed Forces"

Sgt. Ray Gibson

Travel NCO
 Years of service: 10
 Last assignment: Japan Resident Agency, Camp Zama, Japan
 Diversions: Softball
 First impression: "Had a great impression, everyone welcomed me and helped get my family and me settled"

Petty Officer 2nd Class Phillip Gillespie

Years of service: 6
 Last assignment: USS Carl Vinson
 Diversions: Scuba, mountain biking, boating, skiing and camping
 Military education: 4204 Main Propulsion Supervisor and Turbine Repair
 First impression: "A warm atmosphere"

Staff Sgt. William Anthony

Medical NCOIC
 Years of service: 12
 Last assignment: Fort Bliss, Texas
 Diversions: Basketball and weight lifting
 First impression: Good

Sgt. Agatele Thrash

Medical Technician
 Years of service: 7
 Last assignment: 1st Infantry Division, Wurzburg, Germany
 Diversions: Volleyball, cooking and spending time with family
 First impression: Different

Sgt. Sherman Thrash

Medical Technician
 Years of service: 5
 Last assignment: Wurzburg, Germany
 Diversions: Reading
 First impression: Different

Petty Officer 2nd Class Emmanuel Ramos

Medical Technician
 Years of service: 7
 Last assignment: Military Police at Pendleton Hospital
 Diversions: Basketball
 First impression: Good

Christina Carter

Processing NCO
 Years of service: 11
 Last assignment: 201st Military Police Battalion, Fort Gordon, Ga.
 Diversions: Reading
 First impression: Busy

Patrice Detty

Human Resource Assistant
 Last assignment: Child Development Center, Schweinfurt, Germany
 Diversions: Basketball
 First impression: "Warm, loving and family-oriented environment"

Karyl Johnson

Human Resource Assistant
 Years of service: 10
 Diversions: Karate, crafts, dancing
 First impression: "It felt like home, I love it"

Quesha Winfield

Health Technician
 Years of service: 1
 Last assignment: Weed Army Community Hospital, Fort Irwin, Calif.
 Diversions: Computers, books, music
 First impression: "I like it, love the hours"

Michael Robinson

Health Technician
 Diversions: Ministry
 First impression: "A great place, exciting people"

Miami MEPS**Sgt. Joel Salinas**

Medical Section
 Last assignment: Baumholder, Germany
 Diversions: Lifting weights, barbecuing, and watching the Dallas Cowboys play football

Sgt. Michael Worobec

Transportation Specialist
 Years of service: 4
 Last assignment: Schofield Barracks, Hawaii
 Diversions: Racquetball, exploring the local area
 First impression: "A good change of pace"

Milwaukee MEPS**Senior Chief Petty Officer Jesus Garcia**

First Sergeant
 Years of service: 24
 Last assignment: Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill.
 Diversions: College and parenting
 First impression: "It's a real readjustment to a non-Recruit Training Command"

Chief Petty Officer Marion Rains

Medical NCOIC
 Years of service: 13
 Last assignment: Naval Hospital, Great Lakes, Ill.
 Diversions: Snowboarding
 First impression: "The Medical Department is a fast-paced machine"

Tech. Sgt. Laurie Strong

Testing NCOIC
Years of service: 17
Last assignment: Oberammergare, Germany
Diversions: Skiing and hiking
First impression: "The testing section is professional and knowledgeable"

Sgt. Brooke Forney

Transportation NCO
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: Fort Huachuca, Ariz.
Diversions: Reading
First impression: "Milwaukee is a huge city!"

Sgt. John Cardenas

Processing NCO
Years of service: 14
Last assignment: Fort Hood, Texas
Diversions: Officiating sports
First impression: "The Milwaukee MEPS is a well-run machine."

Sgt. Charles Gary

Processing NCO
Years of service: 10
Last assignment: Doha, Qatar
Diversions: Weight lifting
First impression: "Great assignment!"

Sgt. Jeremiah Johnson

Medical Technician
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: Fort Riley, Kan.
Diversions: Skiing and working out
First impression: "I'm glad to be home!"

Darrell Fraley

Medical Technician
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Elementary school teacher
Diversions: Reading, history, and cultural studies
First impression: "Wow, what an abundant amount of paperwork!"

Montgomery MEPS**Petty Officer 1st Class Tina Shields**

Medical Technician
Years of service: 13
Last assignment: Naval Hospital, Jacksonville, Fla.
Civilian education: Associate's Degree
Military education: Corpsman "A" School
Diversions: Completing my nursing degree
First impression: Good

Omaha MEPS**Sgt. Kevin Dollens**

Health Technician
Years of service: 15
Last assignment: Friedberg, Germany
Diversions: Computers and fishing
First impression: "Family environment. Take care of one another"

Portland, Maine MEPS**Petty Officer 2nd Class Karen Sparrow**

Medical Technician
Years of service: 10
Last assignment: U.S. Naval Hospital, Naples, Italy
Military education: Hospital Corps School, Fleet Hospital Phase III; Emergency Medical Technician Instructor
Diversions: Family, cars/racing, softball, working on new house
First impression: "Everyone was friendly and easy to approach. I really enjoy my new workspace."

Chief Petty Officer George Southerland

Operations NCOIC
Years of service: 12
Last assignment: USS Monterrey
Civilian education: Welding diploma from Cape Fear Community College
Military education: Vertical Launching System
Diversions: Softball, hunting, fishing
First impression: "Very nice facility—Great Staff! Look forward to working with everyone"

Sgt. Ryan Knott

Test Administrator
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: Europe Regional Medical Command, Heidelberg Germany
Civilian education: Bachelor's degree
Diversions: Golf, skiing, computers
First impression: "Friendly atmosphere. Everyone is willing to help"

Sacramento MEPS**Cpl. Kelly Sypraseuth**

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 3
Military education: Marine Combat Training, Personnel Admin Course, Martial Art Green Belt Instructor Course
First impression: "I am looking forward to working with the other military services"

St. Louis MEPS**Richard Perez**

Medical Health Technician
Years of service: 12
Last assignment: SHAPE/NATO, Belgium
First impression: "Very good environment"

Patrick Wheeler

Operations
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: Rock Island, Ill.
Diversions: Golf, weights
First impression: "Good impression"

Dennis Lane

Operations
Years of service: 31
Last assignment: St. Louis MEPS Army National Guard Liaison
Diversions: Golf and fishing
First impression: "On August 26, 1971, I was drafted into the service and took my physical through this MEPS on the first floor"

Sgt. Marco Bochmann

Test Administrator
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Camp Zama, Japan
Military education: Mobile Retention Training Team and Combat Life Saver
Diversions: Spending time with my wife and kids and playing golf
First impression: "A good place to work"

San Juan MEPS**Sgt. Melvin Gonzalez**

Test Administrator
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas
Diversions: Sports and spending time with my family
First impression: "I felt right at home"

Tampa MEPS**1st Lt. Laura Westley**

Test Control Officer
Years of service: 3
Civilian education: Bachelor's and Master's degrees
Military education: Air Assault and Postal Schools
First impression: "It's a lot better than 3d ID"

Staff Sgt. Michell Lorenston

Testing NCOIC
Years of service: 17
Last assignment: Personnel NCO, Joint Command, Southeast, Izmir, Turkey
Civilian education: Associate's degree

Sgt. Tiffany Martin

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Legal, Administration
First impression: "Busy!"

Cpl. Danielle Wilson

Processing NCO
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: Fort Meade, Md.
Diversions: Going out with friends, fishing, and boating
First impression: "People are great and everything seems pretty organized and neat"

Sgt. Rachel Simmons

Medical Technician
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: Evacuation Medic, Fort Benning, Ga.
First impression: "Overwhelmed!"

Sgt. 1st Class Keilow King

Medical NCOIC
Years of service: 18
Last assignment: Operations NCO for the Office of the Surgeon General

Sgt. Rodel Gonzalez

Medical Technician
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: HHC 1/15 Infantry, 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga.
Civilian education: Bachelor's degree in Nursing
Diversions: Cooking and basketball
First impression: "It's a place where I can do more for potential DOD soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines"



Albany MEPS

Senior Master Sgt. Timothy Toman
Medical Services Superintendent
Years of Service: 24
Departing for: Pope Air Force Base, N.C.
Award: Defense Meritorious Service Medal

Boston MEPS

1st Lt. David
Test Control Officer
Departing for: Fort Knox, Ky.
Most remembered for: Dedication to the Boston MEPS mission

Denver MEPS

Sgt. 1st Class Alexandria Sizer
Operations NCOIC
Years of Service: 17
Departing for: U.S. Headquarters Element
Pacific Command, Hawaii
Most remembered for: Her attention to detail

Capt. Richard Harney
Operations Officer in Charge
Years of Service: 7.5
Departing for: Civilian life
Most remembered for: His low-key personality

Ardell Richardson
Contracting
Years of Service: 6
Departing for: San Antonio, Texas
Most remembered for: Her long nails!

Sgt. 1st Class Ignacio Villaverde
Medical NCOIC
Years of Service: 14
Departing for: Camp Coiner, Korea
Most remembered for: Jokes, a great sense of humor, and an outstanding work ethic

Honolulu MEPS

Petty Officer 1st Class Travis Boatwright
Operations LPO
Years of service: 11
Departing for: USS Chancellorsville

Indianapolis MEPS

Sgt. Brandi Brown
Unit Clerk
Years of service: 6
Departing for: Civilian life
Most remembered for: Her cheerful attitude

Los Angeles MEPS

Sgt. Clayton Arnold
Medical Technician
Departing for: Yongsan, Korea
Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal
Most remembered for: Always being squared away

Sgt. Misty Wadsworth
Medical Technician
Departing for: Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: "Can do attitude"

Sgt. 1st Class Rudy Blanco
Medical Technician
Years of Service: 20
Departing for: Retirement

Capt. Marva Humphrey
Medical Officer in Charge
Years of Service: 10
Departing for: Fort Irwin, Calif.
Award: Joint Service Commendation Award
Most remembered for: Her leadership and dedication to duty

Milwaukee MEPS

Petty Officer 1st Class Ricardo Garcia
Testing NCO
Years of Service: 20
Departing for: Retirement
Most remembered for: Willing, easygoing personality

Spc. Joseph Kennedy
Testing Administrator
Years of Service: 5
Departing for: Civilian life
Most remembered for: His reliability, dedication, and intelligence

Floyd Carter
Medical Technician
Years of Service: 38
Departing for: Retirement in Florida
Most remembered for: His knowledge of current events

Sgt. Demetric Broomfield
Processing NCO
Years of Service: 14
Departing for: Fort Lee, Va.
Most remembered for: His drill instructor-like demeanor when calling commands

Darren Breckenridge
Medical Technician/Processing Clerk
Years of Service: 6 months
Departing for: Other civilian employment
Most remembered for: His wit and personality

Montgomery MEPS

Staff Sgt. Derrick Mack
Files Room NCOIC
Years of Service: 10
Departing for: Palms, Calif.
Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Being a leader by leading by example and keeping the NCOs motivated

Omaha MEPS

Sgt. Nina Kirk
Health Technician
Years of Service: 10
Departing for: Civilian life
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Her dedication to the mission

St. Louis MEPS

Sgt. Francis Ward
Test Administrator
Years of Service: 10
Departing for: Fort Bliss, Texas
Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal

Sioux Falls MEPS

Dr. Peters Lakstigala
Chief Medical Officer
Years of Service: 31
Departing for: Retirement
Award: Superior Civilian Service
Most remembered for: Commitment to the mission and his sense of humor

Tampa MEPS

Robert Sexton
Medical Technician
Years of Service: 7
Departing for: Civilian life
Most remembered for: Great customer service

Staff Sgt. Angela Reabold
Operations NCO
Years of Service: 14
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Doing It All! Quiet Leadership

HQ, USMEPCOM

Lt. Jason Hudson, Staff Sgt. Rebecca Chapman, Joint Service Achievement Medal; Maj. Richard Spainhour, Capt. Milton Clausen, Sgt. 1st Class John Mayton, Defense Meritorious Service Medal; Staff Sgt. Jerry Wimer, Joint Service Commendation Medal; Tech. Sgt. Kimberly Tellis, Air Force Commendation Medal (2nd Award); Willard Larie, Jr., 35-Year Government Service Certificate; Robert Blanchard, Michelle Evans, 20-Year Government Service Certificate

BOSTON MEPS

1st Lt. Shaalim David, selected as USMEPCOM representative for the General Douglas MacArthur's Leadership Award; Sgt. Anibal Cabral, re-enlistment; Dr. Earl Parson, Civilian of the Year (GS-11 and above); Franco Rufo, Civilian of the Year (GS-5 and below); John Matthews, Civilian of the Year (GS-7 thru GS-9); Sgt. Eileen McGirt, Military Member of the Year; Chuck Savage, Achievement Medal for Civilian Service

BUFFALO MEPS

2nd Lt. Michael Cosimo, Air Force Achievement Medal; Master Sgt. Darryl Dickinson, Joint Service Commendation Medal; Staff Sgt. Adella Carrilo, promotion; Sgt. John Garcia, Military Member of the Quarter; Cathy Woodruff, Civilian Member of the Quarter; Timothy Bondanza, 20-Year Government Service Certificate; Dr. Henry Wymbs, Bette Chapman, Randy Newtown, 15-Year Federal Service Certificate; Bette Chapman, Timothy Bondanza, and Dr. Henry Wymbs, Commander's Award for Civilian Service

FORT DIX MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Waldermarson, re-enlistment, promotion; Sgt. Marsha Leach, re-enlisted; Staff Sgt. Latasha Williams, promotion

INDIANAPOLIS MEPS

Staff Sgt. Anthony Aquino, promotion, re-enlistment

LOS ANGELES MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Emmanuel Ramos, Military Member of the 1st Quarter; Petty Officer 2nd Class Sarah Wagner, Military Member of the Year; Karyl Johnson, Civilian of the 1st Quarter; Brenda Henry, Civilian of the Year; Staff Sgt. Jonathan Cisneros, promoted; Sgt. Sandra Delgadillo, promoted

OMAHA MEPS

Sgt. Iris Myers, Military Member of the 1st Quarter

PORTLAND, MAINE MEPS

Sgt. Michelle Armstead, Military Member of the 3rd Quarter; Master Sgt. Timothy Morse and Staff Sgt. Laura Zamarron, Excellence in Physical Fitness Certificates; Diane Simard, 25-Year Federal Service Certificate and Pin; Rose Newman and Robert Malconian, 20-Year Federal Service Certificate and Pin; Nancy Wilson, 15-Year Federal Service Certificate and Pin; Paul Witten, 10-Year Federal Service Certificate and Pin; Barbara Corbeil, Stephan Drew, Kimberly Lausier, Donna Slack, 5-Year Federal Service Certificate; Donna Slack, Sgt. Michelle Armstead, Bill Wache, Jim Burnell, and Barbara Corbeil, Eastern Sector Commander's Coin; Jim Burnell, Cluster 1 Civilian of the Year (GS-10 and above)

ST. LOUIS MEPS

Richard Perez, Civilian of the 2nd Quarter; Sgt. Clara Garcia, Military Member of the 2nd Quarter; Sgt. Clara Garcia, Richard Perez, Sgt. Eddie Oliver, J.R. James, Letters of Commendation; Tech. Sgt. Rose Baird, distinguished graduate from Gunter NCO Academy; Sgt. Traveon Ward, Military Member of the 1st Quarter; Pat McBride, Civilian of the 1st Quarter

CONGRATS**FORT DIX MEPS**

To **Maj. Cheryl Lee**, who was honored for her contributions to her community, and service to our country, at a luncheon hosted by the Faith, Hope, and Charity Club.

LOS ANGELES MEPS

To **Michael Robinson**, who was ordained as a minister.

To **Sgt. Clayton Arnold**, who received his Associate's Degree in Emergency Medical Services.

SIOUX FALLS MEPS

To **Sgt. 1st Class John Nettles**, who received his Associate's Degree in Applied Management from National American University of Sioux Falls.

BIRTHS**LOS ANGELES MEPS**

Lt. Chris Young, and his wife, **Amanda**, a daughter, Reagan Young, 8 pounds, 3 ounces.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Sarah Wagner and her husband, **David**, a daughter, **Grace Renee**, 6 pounds, 10 ounces.

MIAMI MEPS

Sgt. Joel Salinas and his wife, **Gabriella**, a daughter, **Cataline**, 7 pounds, 11 ounces.

OMAHA MEPS

Sgt. Matthew Bailey, and his wife, **Jennie**, a son, **Christian Neal**, 8 pounds, 7 ounces, 21.5 inches.

SAN ANTONIO MEPS

Congratulations to our Budget Supervisor, **Gloria Blancas**, on the birth of her first granddaughter. Her son, **Manny Jr.**, and daughter-in-law, **Mona**, had a daughter **Mariah Alyse**, 6 pounds, 14 ounces, and 19 3/8 inches.

**Making Strides**

On the day of their participation in a 5K to benefit breast cancer, (left to right) Sgt. Thamahara Roach-Pinzon, Staff Sgt. Kiwanja Harris, Cmdr. Layne Boone, 1st Lt. (P) Vinita Hambrick, Staff Sgt. LaShaun Lockett, Staff Sgt. Schelequia Hazel, Staff Sgt. Kimberly Johndro and Melinda Hazel (Hazel's sister) pose for a photo.

Team takes on 5K to help conquer breast cancer

Breast Cancer will strike more than 200,000 times this year and claim more than 40,000 lives. Eight New York MEPS women made up a team that participated in the Brooklyn Making Strides Against Breast Cancer 5K marathon. The Brooklyn Breast Cancer team raised more than \$50,000.

Making Strides is a non-competitive walk designed to raise awareness, foster camaraderie and raise funds for advancement in breast cancer research, patient services, education and advocacy. The large contributions assist in conquering breast cancer, prevention, detection and education programs and services that help breast cancer survivors in the Brooklyn community.

Dossier



Staff Sgt. Shawn J. Min
*Operations NCOIC
San Jose MEPS*

Hometown: Los Angeles, Calif.

Years in the service: "10 Years and two months."

Hobbies: "Fishing and hiking."

Three things that can always be found in his refrigerator: "Cheese, ice cream, and 2% milk."

Favorite movie and why: "'Castaway,' starring Tom Hanks. From this movie, I learn not to take anything for granted."

Motto he lives by: "Don't look back to the past, always look ahead at what's in front of you in the future."

One food he can't live without: "Hawaiian pizza."

His favorite song by Elvis Presley: "Love Me Tender."

If he could have lunch with any person from history, who would it be and what would he ask him: "Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto from the Japanese Navy. I would like to ask him the vision he had when he first attacked Pearl Harbor, and why there wasn't a second and third air strike immediately after the first one."

What would he do if he had three hours all to himself: "I would like to spend my three hours at the Grand Canyon."

If he were an entertainer, what would he be: "Kick boxing promoter."

If he were an animal, what would he be: "The great eagle — to fly without boundaries."

His favorite Twilight Zone episode?: "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet."

His usual order at McDonald's?: "Big Mac meal with fries, unsalted."

Taxes, early or late: "I do my taxes early because I hate putting things off to the last minute."

Premium gas or regular unleaded: "Regular gas. I don't believe in spending 20 to 30 cents more on premium."

If he won \$20 million, what would he do?: "First, I would like to use \$10 million to establish a scholarship foundation for active duty soldiers taking college courses online. Second, I would like to take my family on a Caribbean cruise. Third, I would continue to serve the U.S. Army until I retire. Money wasn't my biggest motive to serve the country."

His online name: Spinnex

In Memory

Test administrator gives lesson on the art of living

Christine Howard, 78, a longtime test administrator from the Portland, Maine, MEPS, died after a brief struggle with cancer.

Howard administered more than 12,000 ASVAB tests during her 21-year career. "She was one of our best administrators and the schools always requested her," said Jim Burnell, the education services specialist. "It's a sad loss and she's sorely missed."

She is survived by her husband of 56 years, Tom, three daughters and 12 grandchildren.

The Howards owned and operated a True Value hardware store until their retirement. The two were very active and well known in the Milo, Maine, community said Air Force Master Sgt. Tim Morse, who attended the funeral.

"The ceremony was overflowing with the people of Milo," Morse said. "Her sister-in-law read a poem entitled 'The day Milo Cried.' That spoke volumes about the Christine Howard that any of us knew. She was always funny, smiling and caring."

"Her husband used to sit outside the test sessions for three hours to wait for her, and it was evident they had an extremely special relationship," Morse added. "To see a family and community that close and able to so openly express their love for each other was enriching for me."



Christine Howard (right) poses with Master Sgt. Tim Morse and Betty June Weston, another Portland MEPS test administrator at a 2003 training conference.

ASSIGNMENT: Baltimore MEPS



Ask 10 people what they think when they think, "Baltimore," and you're likely to get 10 different answers. Unlike some other communities surrounding other Military Entrance Processing Stations, you don't have to worry about only finding Freddie Fender or Garth Brooks on the jukebox at the local watering hole near the Baltimore MEPS, and you don't have to worry about getting home before getting rolled up in the sidewalks at nightfall. There's a little bit of something for everybody and enough for anybody to find something to do in this big city MEPS, and you can find it 24-7.

First, forget big-city stereotypes like high crime and bad traffic. The MEPS is located on Fort Meade, Md., which sits on Howard and Ann Arundel Counties. The MEPS moved to the post last year from another nearby location. Chief Petty Officer Angelo Brace, the station's first sergeant, who has been assigned there since June 2000, said it's a safe place with a lot to do.

"We're not even close to the city. That's like 25 minutes away," he said. "If you're in the city with the tall buildings, that's where a lot of crime happens. In the outskirts and rural areas, like Fort Meade, it's the suburbs. It's not bad."

Fort Meade is a small city in itself with 5,415 acres and 65 miles of paved road, a huge commissary, and new, spacious housing being built and managed by a local contractor. This may be good or bad. They failed to return repeated phone calls for information and photos.

Off post there's a lot to do, Brace said, but you have to be thrifty with a dollar. Baltimore is a high-cost-of-living area.

"If you aren't watching what you're doing, and you're eating out a lot, it's going to cost you. You have to be careful," he said.

If you don't mind spending the bucks, Baltimore offers plenty of nightlife. The ESPN Zone at the nearby Harbor area is a premiere sports bar with championship billiards. And speaking of sports, Baltimore plays host to the big league Baltimore Ravens football team and Baltimore Orioles baseball team. Music and cigar lovers can hit Upstairs at Max's Mobtown Lounge, which

offers one of Maryland's biggest selections of draft beers. The Funk Box features R&B, jazz, rock, zydeco and reggae musicians; and Bertha's features live jazz and blues Tuesday through Saturday and fresh seafood. Salsa dancers can take refuge at The Havana Club on the third floor of Ruth's Chris Steak House. Much of those places are located in the Inner Harbor, once a rundown warehouse district that's been turned into a thriving area. There's lots more we could write about, but we only have so much room.

Not into the nightlife? Then check out the wildlife. There are plenty of local parks, lakes and state parks for day-long hiking trails where you can leave civilization far away. Cunningham State Park about an hour and 15 minutes from the post has a splendid waterfall that's a favorite for many picture-takers. Even closer is the Patapsco Valley State Park which offers hiking, biking, canoeing, and fishing.

History buffs can find America's first railroad terminal in Ellicott City, and those looking for a real thrill can take the walking ghost tour at Fell's Point from April through November.

"Our community goes all the way back to the 18th century and it's a sailor's town," said Ellen von Karajan from the Fell's Point Preservation Society. "This was the only port not occupied by the British during the Revolutionary War."

And while Ellen hasn't seen any of those ghosts herself, she claims many others have, and the place is overflowing with things that go bump in the night.

There's plenty for the little ones and families, too, including the Baltimore Zoo, the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House where Francis Scott Key wrote our National Anthem; and the Passport Voyages of Discovery which recreates how our founding fathers kept the country together.

Vital stats

Median housing: Yowza! Home prices range from about \$285,000 to \$331,000 according to the Howard County economic development association. Rents can range from about \$1,200 for a one-bedroom to \$2,200 for a three-bedroom apartment, though Brace said there are some bargains around the post. He pays about \$900 a month for a two-bedroom apartment. An E-6 in the



Those willing to get in a car for a short drive can leave the city of Baltimore a world behind. A must-see is this splendid waterfall at Cunningham State Park.

area receives \$1,359 a month for a housing allowance. Most military MEPS employees rent in the local area.

Average temperatures: January ranges from a low of 24 to a high of 41; April ranges from 43 to 65; July ranges from 67 to 88; and October it drops to 46 to 68.

Howard County population: Big and growing ... 264,265, according to the 2003 census.

Looking for love?: The guys still have the edge here. There are about 5,500 more women than men in the local area.

In a nutshell

The MEPS currently employs 51 people, and about half of them are military. That breaks down to 19 civilians, 14 Army, 12 Navy, three Air Force, two Marines, and one Coast Guardsman. The crew has responsibility for 23 counties in Maryland, two counties in Delaware, 10 counties in Virginia, three counties in West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Looking for more information: You can spend all day on the Internet reading Web sites about the surrounding areas and communities. Don't tell the boss, but that's what we did, anyway, for this story. Here are a few to get you started:

www.ftmeade.army.mil

www.visithowardcounty.com

www.visit-annapolis.org/



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